

TOURISM, CULTURE AND BUSINESS

# ICELANDIC TIMES

ISSUE 14 • 2012



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# ICELANDIC TIMES

When I first came to Iceland, a majority of the roads outside the capital and most towns or villages were gravel or worse. Icelanders had discovered the many wonders and secrets of their country, but few visitors learned much about them. It's a testament to the Icelanders vision and personal initiative that, today, all round the country, you will find tourist facilities and organisations that open up practically every aspect of the country to the gaze of the visitors from abroad, who have increased many-fold in number over the intervening years.

The country has moved swiftly to build up an infrastructure to make visiting Iceland a much more rewarding experience. It has lost little of its mystique, however. It was not called 'Europe's best kept secret' for nothing and, even for the frequent

visitor or resident, there is always something new to discover. It's a country that does not reveal its secrets to the casual observer but to those who take the challenge to dig them out.

Today, there are tour companies who will teach you more in one day as you enjoy a chauffeur-driven ride to many of the hidden as well as the most popular sights. Such is the importance given to opening up the secrets to visitors that it takes a thorough university course to train guides.

Hotels, guesthouses and campsites have sprung up all around the country, each offering a different perspective on their part of the country. You can even travel right up through the middle of the country, passing famous sights like Geysir and Gullfoss, the less-travelled, but spectacular Kerlingarfjöll, crossing

rivers and winding your way between mountain ranges in the rugged highlands of the interior. Small this country may be, but it possesses Europe's largest glacier and most powerful river. Today, guides can take you there in safety.

Nonetheless, the natural forces are not to be trifled with. Weather can change in a matter of moments under the jet stream. Many roads can only be driven with 4x4's or Superjeeps. We have our share of volcanos here, too, if you just think back a couple of years. But it all adds to the challenge and excitement of this young country on fire in the basement.

On the surface, the beauty of the nature is breathtaking. The birdlife brings both professional and amateur birdwatchers and photographers. Now hikers and cyclists, campers and caravanners are unravelling more of the precious secrets this country possesses. We hope you will find your own to take home something special with you.

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### Icelandic language

Icelandic is one of the European root languages, like Latin. There is no 'c' or 'z' in modern Icelandic, except in foreign words. However, it still contains some letters not found in most other languages. This basic list provides a general idea of their sounds, using familiar words rather than phonetics.

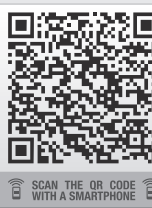
Character	Pronunciation
á	Like 'ow' in 'cow'
æ	Like the personal pronoun 'I'
ð	Like 'th' in 'that'
þ	Like 'th' in 'thing'

### How to make use of QR codes



Use your QR code reader application on your smartphone or iPad to scan the QR codes. QR code reader applications can be downloaded free for all makes of smartphones

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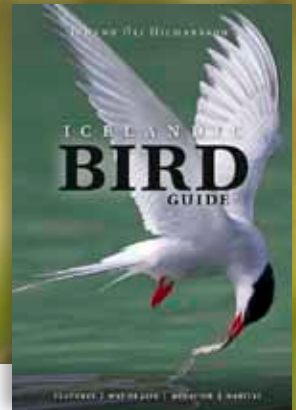
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# ENJOY ICELANDIC NATURE



## FLOWERING PLANTS AND FERNS OF ICELAND Hörður Kristinsson

This is a book for anyone interested in nature, specialist and nonspecialist alike. Organised by flower colour and other distinguishing characteristics, it's very easy to use.



## ICELANDIC BIRD GUIDE Jóhann Óli Hilmarrsson

A new book on the Icelandic bird fauna. This is a bird identification guide with photographs of all the birds that breed in Iceland, winter visitors, summer visitors, passage migrants and vagrants.

### PANTANIR/HOW TO ORDER:

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101 Reykjavík, Iceland



**FORLAGIÐ**



## FREEDOM IN FASHION

*Women's clothing from 1947 to 1970 at the National Museum of Iceland*

Life had been tough before the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War in Iceland but independence brought a sense of fresh hope and freedom. Women's fashions changed. Skillful designers and seamstresses, often inspired by European or American trends created new dresses for women. Each dress is a unique work of art, reflecting the culture of the time.

### Fashion – gorgeous gowns An exhibit of style and beauty

Brought together in one exhibition, The 'Tizka Collection' or 'Fashion-gorgeous gowns' includes both dresses owned by the National Museum and private collectors. It covers the simple, everyday wear all the way to glamorous gowns and wedding dresses.

Most of these dresses were designed for a particular woman, wearing specific underwear to bring out the best in both dress and woman. Some of these couture creations might have only been worn on a single occasion, a dramatic outburst of style for a special event, now long forgotten in history.

The beauty of these creations is not forgotten, however, and the styles of these bygone eras is a reminder of the skills of both expert dressmakers and untrained seamstresses.

Of course, an ensemble is incomplete if it doesn't have the right accessories to go with it and these, too, are included in the exhibition so the visitor can imagine the full impact that the wearer made when she made her entrance.

### National Costumes made by a craftswoman

Running concurrently is an exhibition dedicated to the handicraft of Magna Þorkelsdóttir. She was the wife of the former bishop of Iceland and her needlework and designs are of very high quality, earning her a place of great respect for her national costumes. This exhibition shows some of the national costumes she made in her lifetime for both herself, her children and grand-children.

The Icelandic national costume is varied in design but very elegant in its craftsmanship. The attention to detail and

the precious metals and stones used in its decoration makes each one not just a work of art but a treasure, also.

### A Museum of Icelandic Life

The fashion exhibition will be running until the 2<sup>nd</sup> September in the Arc Hall and the exhibition of the Icelandic costumes by Magna Þorkelsdóttir until August 28<sup>th</sup> on the Third Floor in the National Museum of Iceland which can be found close to the National Library and the University of Iceland. The museum carries numerous exhibitions, both temporary and permanent. It offers a fascinating perspective into what makes Iceland today, its culture and heritage.

*The museum is open daily from 10 am to 5 pm until 15<sup>th</sup> September*

-ASF

Þjóðminjasafn Íslands



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Extensive safety procedures are followed in all steps of the tour and passengers are accompanied with specially trained guides at all times. All equipment and processes have been tested extensively and approved by the administration of Occupational Safety and Health in Iceland.

  
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## FOCUS ON FASHION AT KRAUM

*Icelandic designers are developing fashion for men and women*

Iceland is a country with inspiration in its blood. It pours out through an ever increasing number of talented designers for everything from the humble pancake pan to the latest developments in fish skin to make top quality men and women's shoes.

When Kraum opened in the renovated oldest building in Reykjavik, a group of just 30 designers presented their ideas. Their number has swelled to more than 300 from all over the country and the range of products has multiplied in like manner.

### Designed with Men in mind

Women's clothing and accessories found a natural home in the shop but the latest development is for men's designer clothing to join them. Starting with a range of shirts, named after the ravens of Norse god, Odinn, they look really stylish. A range of pants complements them, making an ideal ensemble for business or partying.

### A Mecca for the unique

The Vikings were renowned for their engineering and craftsmanship skills. That heritage has not just been passed down to their descendents, but amplified over the years

so that the range of unique ideas and designs, skillfully using both common and unusual materials in totally new ways, is unsurpassed. Whether it is living jewellery or a stool that is a light or a shaggy lambskin seat, a butterfly formed by the play of light and shadow or a pair of fishskin shoes, it is immediately obvious that it is the work of a thoughtful, inspired designer, creating something never otherwise found in our mass-produced world.

If you are looking for a memorable gift for someone special, the choice from over 300 designers may seem a little overwhelming but the way the shop is laid out, it is easy and quick to find what you're looking for—or even find something you didn't know you were looking for which fits the bill more precisely than you could have hoped.



Shipping is no problem. Being designer products, they are designed to be easily shipped. Kraum will handle the shipping for you if you're too heavily laden to take it with your flight. If you forgot something, it is easy to order from their website, too.



### Finding Kraum

Look for the oldest building in Reykjavik and you will find Kraum. Originally built by the Icelandic reformer, Skúli Magnússon, as a factory to produce goods for his needy countrymen, it is found by Ingólfstorg, the square down a little way from the Post Office.

-ASF



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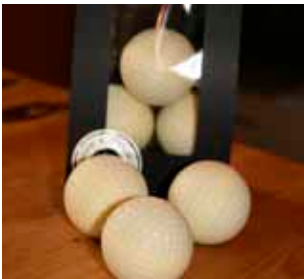
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Products available in stores around Iceland

[www.icewear.is](http://www.icewear.is)



## REAL CHOCOLATE!

*Once you have tasted the real thing, you'll never want to go back*

**N**estled in the oldest house in Reykjavik sits the greatest temptation to a sweet tooth. Built originally as a factory for workers to produce desperately needed goods, today it provides a service to the taste buds. Here you will find Hafliði's creations and you will quickly understand why so few ever reach a visitor's home country untouched. This is temptation at its best.

In any of the world's supermarkets, you will find chocolate of all kinds—except the real handmade variety. Hafliði not only makes delicious truffles with a variety of delicious fillings but he also makes a number of unique chocolate varieties—and I really do mean unique.

### Caviar never tasted so good

For instance, when you buy canned fish or caviar, you'll usually find it sold in an oval or round tin. In the Aðalstræti boutique, you'll find similar oval tins—but the contents have nothing to do with the sea. Reminiscent only of caviar by their ball shape, the contents are a special chocolate mix in dark, milk or white chocolate.

### Eruptions of flavour

Iceland is famous—or notorious—for its volcanos and here, on the shelves, you will find a range of different flavoured and filled chocolate volcanos, aptly named after their geological name-sakes, but with an explosion

of flavour rather than fire. That sounds pretty violent but it's actually more of an adventure into the world of the senses that simply doesn't exist in supermarket chocolate.

### Gifts of love

Here, you become the connoisseur of both the subtle and the extremes of taste. It's one of those times best shared with those closest to you. For such moments, Hafliði has the ideal gift: a set of rich, red hearts filled with a seductive flavour that will make the time memorable.

### Step into the world of chocolate

Shopping for chocolate in this special house is an experience in itself. Here, you get to see different elements of the chocolate-making process and get a sense of what is involved in bringing you Hafliði's final creations. It's an easy place to find. There's a square right at the end of Reykjavík's main shopping street in the centre of town, and it's on the far side, Aðalstræti 10.



Mosfellsbakari -ASF

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Situated in the heart of the old centre of Reykjavík.



# AN ICELANDIC ICON

*The Heart of Reykjavik City*

The spacious but intimate Café Paris is a café and a restaurant known for first-class service and bistro-style meals, primarily made using fresh local produce, in the heart of the city centre, Austurvöllur. Austurvöllur is Iceland's Champ du Mars, where locals relax on warm summer afternoons, overlooked by the Icelandic House of Parliament, and the Cathedral Church, Dómkirkjan.

Its long history and esteemed reputation has contributed to it being one of the most successful restaurants and cafés in all of Iceland. This year, Café Paris celebrates its twentieth anniversary and guests were asked for their feedback to help the management continue to offer the highest standards.

In this, its anniversary year, Café Paris has a professional staff providing great service, knowledgeable about the menu, wine, cocktail and coffee selections and the mouth-watering desserts.



## A Landmark for all

Café Paris is a city landmark meaning different things to different people. It's a place where artists contemplate in solitude, where writers busily document their thoughts on a laptop, where politicians escape heated debates and share a quiet moment together, where young adults giggle and smile over Mocha and sweetened Latte, where young mothers share a slice of a homemade chocolate cake and creamy coffee, where students gather to celebrate and where hungry travellers come to experience the Icelandic bistro culture.

In summer, the tables outdoors facing the Parliament are always packed. Sheltered from the North Atlantic breeze, days of sunshine in the very heart of the city are hard to resist, and the well-trained and experienced staff make sure no one goes hungry or thirsty.

## Eat in style

There is nothing like the house white wine boiled mussels and a glass of Pinot Grigio on a beautiful summer's day, or a succulent burger with a bun fresh out of the oven and ice-cold beer.

For dessert, the house speciality is a French chocolate cake—freshly baked in house—and best served with deluxe coffee. The well kept secret recipe is legendary in Reykjavik.

## A Weekend Hotspot

Come the weekend, Café Paris turns into a sophisticated bar with live jazz music playing from 11 pm. The atmosphere is a unique fusion of a Parisian jazz club and a sophisticated Icelandic wine bar. The wide variety of imaginative cocktails is the creation of ambitious bartenders who aim to impress with their blend of rich flavours.



Café Paris caters to all ages and nationalities. Café Paris may seem to be a Parisian café in Reykjavik but local culinary traditions and fresh Icelandic produce are at the heart of this Reykjavik bistro.

-JB

Café Paris



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# More Iceland for less money



All seasons!

## Blue Lagoon Schedule

Pickup at hotel in Reykjavik upon request  
09:00 / 10:30 / 12:30 / 14:45 / 16:45

Blue Lagoon to Reykjavik  
12:30 / 14:00\* / 16:00 / 18:00 / 20:30 - *Via Keflavik Airport*

Blue Lagoon to Keflavik Airport  
12:30 / 14:00 / 21:00\*\*

\*\* From 15. June - 15. Sept.

• Please book in advance.

To airport passengers;

• Be ready in front of your hotel.  
Pickup can take up to 30 min.

we keep your luggage during  
your Blue Lagoon visit.

## The South Coast - Skógafoss - Vik

Our tour takes us along the south shore and on to the charming village of Vik. Highlights on this tour: Waterfalls Skógafoss and Seljalandsfoss. The basalt columns at sandy beach of Reynis- fjara and the glacier Sólheimajökull, where you can touch the ice. We drive along the volcano Eyjafjallajökull, last eruption in 2010.

Pick up time: Mon/Wed/Fri at 08:00

Duration: 10 hours

Professional english guidance

## Grand Golden Circle

Highlights visited: The crater Keríð, the farming districts in the south, Faxi waterfall and the spectacular Geysir. The waterfall Gullfoss, the national park Thingvellir, including the Rift valley and the Rock of law which was the site of the first Viking parliament.

Time for lunch at Geysir (not incl. in price).

Pick up time: Daily at 08:00

Duration: 8 hours

Professional english guidance

Please notice: You can join The Blue Lagoon evening tour after arrival.

## Golden Circle Afternoon

Highlights visited: The national park Thingvellir, the waterfall Gullfoss, the spectacular Geysir and the volcanic crater Keríð.

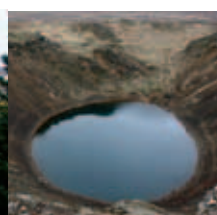
Pick up time: Tue/Thu/Sat/Sun at 12:30

Duration: 5-6 hours

Professional english guidance

Explore the unique volcanic and arctic nature of Iceland

**BUSTRAVEL**  
Iceland



# TAKE A TOUR ALVARO SIZA

The Nordic house offers a tour with world famous architect Alvaro Siza (portrayed by an actor), where guests are taken through the Nordic House, introduced to the design and history of the museum.

Come and experience an architectural gem right in the heart of Reykjavik.

Tuesdays–Fridays at 11pm, June, July and August.

The tour is in english and costs 10€.

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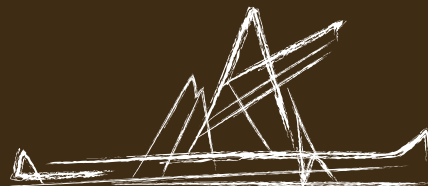
# R WITH ALTO

Alvar Aalto  
the history of the  
master himself.

heart of the city.



See preview of the tour



**NORRÆNA HÚSIÐ**



# THE ARTIST & HIS BLEEDING HEART

*A look into the life and emotions of Ásmundur Sveinsson*

One of the more interesting exhibitions in Reykjavík city this year is ‘The Fire Within’ by Ásmundur Sveinsson (1893–1982), one of Iceland’s most innovative artists in the twentieth century.

The exhibition is held in Ásmundarsafn, one of the three facilities belonging to the Reykjavík Art Museum, and the former residence of Ásmundur Sveinsson that he built with his bare hands. The exhibition began on 5<sup>th</sup> May runs until 14<sup>th</sup> April 2013, and exhibition manager Kristín Guðnadóttir and Public Programme Manager, Kristín Dagmar Jóhannsdóttir explained about the artist and the idea behind ‘The Fire Within’.

Ásmundur Sveinsson returned to rural Iceland in 1929, the year the Great Depression swept across the world, after residing in the heart of European culture—in glamorous cities like Paris and Stockholm.

Ásmundur began building his future home in Sigtún on the rural borders of an expanding city. In the museum lobby, the construction history is traced from the raw sketches in 1942 to its completion in 1950.

‘The Fire Within’ is the portrayal of Ásmundur’s personal sorrows and joys and his interest in the great space race of in the 1960’s. The exhibition opened with a symbolic performance by two young children, the grandchildren of Rannveig Pálmadóttir whom, as a child, Ásmundur took under his wing and introduced to the world of art by asking her to fetch a pail of water, soap and a cloth and wash the feet of the sculptures in his garden, now known as Sculpture Park. Her grandson and granddaughter performed the same ritual as she had done, slowly and respectfully.

The exhibition itself is divided into three central themes each enhanced with rich and symbolic wall paintings and intense lightning.

The first theme is the ‘Garden’, for which the inner wall in the Crescent and exhibition space was painted green. The

theme celebrates his love and admiration of women. In many of his works, the maternal representation of womanhood prevails but in the garden, the woman is an erotic but a tender lover and she is celebrated as such. ‘Man and Woman’ is a symbolic piece wrought in red clay to underline her raw eroticism and tenderness.

The second theme is the ‘Battlefield’, for which the outer walls of the Crescent and exhibition space are painted in dark red. The battlefield is life itself and portrays the artist’s bleeding heart and his sorrows in life. ‘Black Clouds’ is a dark-gray concrete and obsidian piece in which a voluptuous but barren woman figure with swollen breasts looks down on the void in her empty embrace.

Ásmundur survived the two great wars of the twentieth century and several works in the exhibition are representative of his experiences both from before and after WWII, when he travelled to the mainland of Europe and witnessed the devastation of unthinkable cruelty.

The third, and the most expansive theme is the ‘Yearning for Space’. Influenced by the great space race in the late fifties and sixties, Ásmundur’s rich imagination gave birth to pieces such as ‘Flying Saucers’, ‘The Last Migratory Bird’, ‘Harmony of the Spheres’ and ‘Yearning for Space’, all located in the Pyramid.

The centre of the theme however is in the blue Dome, a stairway away from the museum lobby. The three pieces are small in scale but direct the eye to the very centre of the dome where voices travel far and ring loudly in the lobby. The mood is captured with a growing sense of losing one’s balance, a sensation that runs through the body as one returns to the white-walled lobby. *-JB*



## Opening hours

*from 10 am to 5 pm daily from 1<sup>st</sup> May to 30<sup>th</sup> September, and 1 pm to 5 pm from 1<sup>st</sup> October to 30<sup>th</sup> April.*



Ásmundarasafn



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# WE'LL MEET IN THE

## Laugardalslaug—the most popular swimming pool in Reykjavik

Swimming in one of Reykjavik's seven geothermal swimming pools and the unique Ylströnd geothermal beach is very invigorating. The pools, which are open all year, attract nearly 2 million visitors and for a good reason! Enjoy soaking in the warm water originating from a geothermal drill hole within the city limits.

### Cool like a pool

Reykjavik's swimming pools are definitely cool—as in hip. The water in the main pool is about 29° Celsius / 83° Fahrenheit which is quite comfortable. In warmer countries people jump into the pool to cool off—here in Iceland, it is exactly the opposite. You want to jump in to keep warm! The children's pool is even warmer than the main pool and if that is not warm enough, then you have 7 hot tubs to choose from ranging in temperature from 37°C to 43°C.



© Stefan Heigi Valsson

The largest hot tub in Laugardalslaug swimming pool has space for 50 people.

### Reykjavik's most popular pool

Laugardalslaug Olympic size swimming pool is the largest and most popular pool in Iceland. Originally built in 1968 and since renovated periodically, it was visited by 750,000 people in 2011. The main pool has several 50 m lanes for casual swimming, exercise and competition. There is an

indoor pool for training and competition, a children's pool with slightly warmer water than the main pool, 3 children's water slides, a wipe-out-style challenge, 7 hot tubs of various temperatures and a steam bath. In addition, it is possible to order a massage prior to your visit.

### New at the pool in 2012

A saltwater hot tub just opened in Laugardalslaug. It is the first one of its kind in Iceland. The saltwater comes from a drill hole near the sea on the northern side of the Reykjavik peninsula, about one kilometre from the pool. The saltwater is cold when it comes from the ground but it is heated to 40°C. Children love the new wipe-out style 'iceberg challenge' which consists of a mesh of ropes overhead and iceberg-like floats in the water. The challenge is to walk on the icebergs over





# THE POOL

a distance of 7 m without falling into the water. Finally, the tallest waterslide at Laugardalslaug swimming pool has been revamped and now has LED-lights in the ceiling for a part of the ride.

## Great place to meet the locals

Swimming pools and hot tubs are an important meeting place for local people of all ages. Many of the most frequent visitors come to the pool first and foremost to socialise rather than exercise. They typically come to the pool on a certain day of the week and time of day when they know their friends are there, too. Because nearly everyone in Iceland enjoys going to the pool you might bump into Iceland's most famous singer, the mayor of Reykjavik, pop stars, TV-personalities, actors, members of parliament, university lecturers and students.

## Pool etiquette

It is considered very important to shower naked and wash thoroughly before entering the pool for hygiene reasons. Visitors who don't conform may have one of the staff, or even guests ask them to do so. Most people leave their towel behind in a special area near the showers while they go into the pool. Bath robes and sandals are hardly ever seen around pools but people with long hair are expected to wear a shower cap. Be considerate to other swimmers. Try not to swim in a lane with faster swimmers so they won't have to overtake you. When it looks like you're going to swim into a person you're supposed to veer to the right.

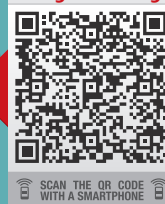
## Great water quality

The water in Reykjavik's swimming pools is of the highest quality. It comes from drill holes in three different areas, in and

near Reykjavik. The quality of the water is inspected four times a day by the pool staff and four times a year by independent health and safety inspectors. The clean natural geothermal water and regular inspection ensures the highest water quality possible.

Laugardalslaug opens at 06:30 in the morning and closes at 22:00 at night on week days in summer. Saturdays and Sundays it is open from 8 in the morning. The price in 2012 is 500 kr. for adults and 120 kr. for children under the age of 18. Disabled and senior citizens go free.

### Laugardalslaug



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www.swimminginiceland.com

-SHV



## REFINEMENT IN REYKJAVIK

*Einar Ben brings style and class to dining*

**E**inar Ben is one of a select few restaurants in the highly competitive Reykjavik scene, where new, trendy places come and go on a monthly basis, that has found its way into the Icelandic psyche and has been able to maintain the delicate balance of class, comfort and top-rate food that inspires customers to return.

### Discreet and Tasteful

Upon entering the refined hall on the second floor of a century-old gentry's townhouse, it is easy to see why Einar Ben has become a part of Reykjavik's culture. It is free of pretense and excess whilst offering one of the best dining experiences in town.

The interiors are elegantly decorated, honouring the building's rich history and when walking around the restaurant, you feel you're passing through a home, instead of garish or bare and minimalistic dining halls.

The restaurant is, in fact, the former home of one of Iceland's greatest heroes, after whom it is named. Einar Ben was a poet and pioneer who personified the dreams and ambitions of Icelanders in the early 20th century.

You'll also notice the quiet, professional, yet friendly staff who seem to take pride in catering to their visitors, as opposed to rushing in and out as many paying customers as possible in one night.

### Classic Dishes With a Twist

All of this is a pleasant addition to what matters the most: the meals. Philip Harrison, Einar Ben's English chef, takes great pride in only using the freshest Icelandic ingredients. When I dropped by Einar Ben's on a cosy Sunday evening, a new delivery of game reindeer had just arrived in Reykjavik.

"Our dishes are based on the classics: fish and lamb. We're proud of our menu and have no interest in following trends, which would ultimately compromise what Einar Ben stands for. The menu's subtitle of 'pure Icelandic' refers to its ingredients, whereas the dishes are also based on French and Danish traditions. We pride ourselves on healthy portions and hearty sauces", says owner Jóhann. That doesn't prevent innovation, however, and the restaurant has just developed a new menu that builds on their experience.

For starters, we were treated to a delicious langoustine & pumpkin soup, which set the mood for what was to come. The Arctic char served with a celeriac puree, mashed potatoes and spinach confirmed that Jóhann's claims of Einar Ben's seafood expertise were not exaggerated – truly exquisite. The lamb loin served with crushed potatoes and parsnip puree was cooked to perfection and shows what he means when he says that Icelandic lamb is the best in the world when cooked correctly. The skyr and ice cream desserts are not to be missed: true delicacies made with unique Icelandic ingredients, including freshly picked blueberries and rhubarb.

### Unwind at the Red Bar

The 'red bar' on the top floor is ideal for following a top class meal with a drink in a tranquil atmosphere. Those looking for a place to start a night out on the town should try the red bar as well.

-ASF

**Einar Ben**



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 [ainarben@ainarben.is](mailto:ainarben@ainarben.is)  
 [www.ainarben.is](http://www.ainarben.is)

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massive wood tables, you can easily imagine yourself as a Viking.



Give them a call to book your dinner, as this is a popular venue. It's the way to be totally immersed in the life and culture of the Vikings - and will doubtless give you a few surprises and something to tell people when you get home. After all, how many people encounter Vikings and live to tell the tale?

## A VIKING'S VALHALLA

*Food, Drink and Entertainment at the Viking Tavern*

**W**elcome to the Land of the Vikings! You may not see their long boats in the harbour today, but there's one in Vikingakráin's restaurant. With their love of food and drink, is it any wonder that it has been converted to the bar for this Viking dining hall, set in the loft of one of the old buildings in the centre of Reykjavik.

As you walk through the entrance gate in the high wooden stockade, you feel you're entering a Viking hall.

Every night, diners are regaled by entertainment in true Viking tradition with actors, poets or storytellers. The experience is so authentic that, as you enjoy their hospitality with food and drinks, sitting at

**Vikingakráin**

-ASF



Naustunum 1 • 101 Reykjavík  
**+354 551 1717**  
vikingakrain@vikingakrain.is  
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Out come the greatest singers and musicians, the most spellbinding story-tellers, the most eloquent poets... Need I say more?



You can meet them yourself in this downtown pub where pleasure is just a pint away. And if you fancy yourself as a singer, go on Thursdays for their open mic evenings. You'll find the audience very sympathetic, won't yer now?

## THE HAPPIEST PUB IN TOWN

*What the Vikings brought from Ireland: The Dubliner*

**T**he country is Iceland. The clients are international. The beer is cold. The music is live. The atmosphere is totally Celtic. This is the Irish pub that everyone comes to Iceland to find. This is the happiest pub in town. This is the Dubliner.

Now you know why the Vikings stopped off in Ireland on their way here. They knew a good thing when they saw it. They swiped all the beautiful girls and the best beer and some of the men. Everyone knows what the Irish are like with some beer inside them.

**Dubliner**

-ASF



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www.dubliner.is





# GIFTS FROM THE VIKING

*Take home a part of Iceland with you for posterity*

**T**he etymology of 'souvenir' lies in the similar French word meaning 'to remember', 'to recall'. For almost sixty years, travellers have been buying their gifts and souvenirs from 'The Viking'.

### **The Tailor from the North**

Sigurður Guðmundsson opened the first store in the '50s in the northern town of Akureyri. In the beginning, the shop sold souvenirs in the summer and mainly wooden toys in the winter. Sigurður was a tailor and that's where the tradition of selling local products began, a tradition continuing to the present day. Tinna Berglind

Guðmundsdóttir, Sigurður's granddaughter and shop manager has helped in the store since she was 7 years old.

### **Symbols of Iceland**

Ice, Vikings and volcanos. Big symbols of Iceland. "We have one of the biggest collections of gifts and souvenirs in Iceland", says Sigurður Guðmundsson, the shop owner. The six stores around the country offer great gift options to fit everyone's budget: photo albums or books about Vikings and their sagas; traditional and warm lopapeysa (wool sweaters); Yule lads or troll statues; cool T-shirt designs by 'The Viking'. For

something more fancy, there is the silver and lava stone jewellery or a fine set of wine glasses of Icelandic design. Children would love to play with a puffin stuffed toy. All the products are provided by local producers.

### **Feel the warmth of Iceland**

The traditional knitted sweaters started to become popular in the 1950's. The yarn used, lopi, is made from 100% natural Icelandic sheep wool, which has the property of keeping you warm, letting your skin breath and being waterproof at the same time. It is believed that the origin of 'peysa' comes from the French word 'paysan' (peasant). As French sailors



arrived in Iceland they pointed at the farmers and said, "Paysan!" and the Icelanders thought they were referring to their wool sweaters.

'The Viking' collaborates with local producers and has a big collection of sweaters in different sizes and colours along with the very popular hats and fluffy woollen mittens.

### Six locations around the country

Five years ago, the family decided to expand their stores. Now, there are three in Reykjavik at Hafnarstræti 3 and on the city's main shopping street, Laugavegur 1. A new shop will open at Laugavegur 4 in the middle of June. In their home town,



of Akureyri, you can find them again on Hafnarstræti and down by the old harbour and in the West Fjörds, in the town of Ísafjörður. The family business is making a full circle going back to Akureyri. In the beginning of June, Cafe Björk will open in the one of the most beautiful locations in town, the Botanical Garden. With a terrace and surrounded by flowers, this is a must if you happen to be in Akureyri.

### Forget about taxes

Don't forget to have your taxes refunded at the airport or in the last port where your ship stops in Iceland. You'll get 15% back. And here's another tip: you can get discounts with 'The Viking' coupons from the Visitor's Guide handbook!

-AB

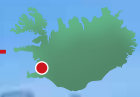


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# MOUNTAIN MADE PO

*Enjoy the beauty of the glaciers v*





# NEERING SSIBLE

with Icelandic Mountain Guides



### Awards and recognitions

*2006: Iceland Air Pioneer Award for the innovation and development of Glacier Walks.*

*2009: The Environmental Award from the Icelandic Tourist Board for environmental policy and awareness*

*2010: The Icelandic Travel Industry Association (SAF) Education Award for education and continuous training of guides*

*2010: The Icelandic Travel Industry Association Innovation Award for the innovation and development of Glacier Walks.*

*The company has also been nominated for the Nordic Nature and Environmental Prize 2011.*

Standing on top of a glacier is a goal you'd imagine only experienced mountain climbers are able to achieve, but it's actually simpler than you think—it's even achievable in a day's trip from Reykjavik. But one cannot, of course, walk safely on top of a treacherous glacier without the help of experienced guides who have mapped out every crack in the ice and know the difference a single misstep can make. For over eighteen years Icelandic Mountain Guides have been finding ways to make these imposing phenomena reachable to all those who wish to explore them.

### Step Into a Different World

Icelandic Mountain Guides offer day tours from Reykjavik to the Sólheimajökull glacier, as well as several day tours from Skaftafell National Park, which connects to Europe's largest glacier, Vatnajökull. But why would anyone want to visit such a foreign and unforgiving landscape? For Leifur Örn Svavarsson, guide and co-founder of Icelandic Mountain Guides, who has scaled the glaciers hundreds of times and never tires of it, the answer is simple: "It is like stepping into a different world. Standing on top of pure ice, hearing the creaks and flow of water underneath, seeing the caves and crevasses, gets you as close to the essence of Iceland as is possible. We have been doing it since we were young and simply felt that you can never fully experience Iceland without trying it, which is why we established Icelandic Mountain Guides," says Leifur.

### Glacier Walks are easy & accessible to all

The range of tours is designed to fit the needs of Iceland's different visitors. "If you can walk up stairs, you can reach a part

of a glacier with us", says Leifur. With everything from family friendly glacier walks to quite challenging hikes through Iceland's most scenic destinations, including Hvannadalshnúkur (Iceland's highest peak), Eyjafjallajökull volcano, Hrútsfjallstindar and Fimmvörðuháls. It is true to say that all outdoor enthusiasts can find something to their liking with Icelandic Mountain Guides.

### Setting the bar for safety

Before taking inexperienced mountaineers up to these glittering jewels, they had to make sure that all possible safety measures were taken, which is why they've implemented a strenuous training programme for all their guides. The educational programme entails 27 days of direct training and exams, followed by over 100 days under direct and indirect supervision, including comprehensive first-aid courses. These steps have paid off, as Icelandic Mountain Guides's accident free history and the awards they've won for education and safety demonstrate.

### Not just ice

Icelandic Mountain Guides offer a wide range of outdoor and adventure tours in both Iceland and Greenland with everything from short day tours to overnight tours and expeditions. Find more information about day tours at the Icelandic Travel Market at Bankastræti 2 in Reykjavik or their offices in Skógar and Skaftafell National Park.

-VAG

Mountainguides



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+354 587 9999  
mountainguides@mountainguides.is  
www.mountainguides.is

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369 steps to the Reykjavik City Center

389 steps to the Maritime Museum

423 steps to the Harpa Concert Hall

NORTH

# Welcome to the friendly village by the Old Harbour

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# BEST SPICE IN TOWN

*Thai Express gives you a healthy bite from the exotic East*

**T**hai Express in Mosfellsbær, with their authentic Thai cooking and reasonable prices, has been an instant success. It was a great addition to the local life and is a perfect stop for lunch or dinner for people passing through town who are looking for an alternative to the typical fast food meal. It's a nice place to sit and relax in, yet has quick service and tasty, healthy food. It's also a great choice for the growing number of tourists

staying in Mosfellsbær since what could be nicer on a beautiful summer night than to have a picnic with your take away!

The menu has all the classic Thai favourites such as rich curries and stir-fry dishes, fried rice and noodles with either meat or vegetables, deep-fried dishes such as shrimp and spring rolls with an assortment of sauces to choose from, like the classic satay and the delicious mango and coriander. As an extra



healthy choice they offer freshly pressed juice from fruit and vegetables and protein shakes with berries. They also have a special children's menu and various offers and guests can buy beer and wine with their meal.

*Thai Express is located on first floor in the small shopping centre of Mosfellsbær, Kjarninn.*

**Thai Express**

-HP



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🌐 www.thaiaexpress.is

Images by Gabriel Rureberg



# VIKINGS AT THE HARBOUR

*Viking clothes made with soul*

**J**enny Kolsöe opened The Vikingloft to make something different. Each pattern is unique! Made with a lot of love, these clothes will keep you warm, compliment your figure and...protect you.

simple and elegant lines, long headed hoodies (the longer the tail, the richer you would have been). The Vikings needed practical clothing, so the cut and pattern are simple. "You can do so much with it", says Jenny. She can embroider any decorative motif you want on your garment—like the rune symbol Vegvísir

## Protected by the Runes

Many outfits are inspired from Viking times: natural materials, comfortable cloaks,

(sign post) for someone to find their way or the Helm of Awe, to protect and keep from harm.

## Thoughtful gifts

Latest additions are the bone jewellery from Djupavogur, East Iceland. The earrings and medallions are made from natural materials like sheep's horn or stones. Or pick one of the hand painted cards with Odin's ravens.

## A reading from Hrafna the Völva

You can also explore the ancient craft of reading in runes. Hrafna the Völva will lead you in finding answers to your questions. Find more about yourself and your future and learn more about Viking ways in a shop with soul.

-AD



**The Vikingloft**



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🌐 www.hotelshopping.com

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# HARBOURSIDE SUSHI

*Sushimiðjan-Midori, a Top Class Restaurant at the Old Harbour*

In one of the bright green buildings down at the old harbour is Sushimiðjan, a bright and busy sushi restaurant.

Serving a range of tasty sushi dishes with sake, wine or beer, this is a very popular eating and meeting place.



Sitting on the patio on a warm summer day, enjoying a delicious sushi and the view over the harbour to Mount Esja across the bay, this is the life! For freshness, the harbour is the place to be. The combination of Icelandic fish and sushi cannot be beaten for quality and flavour - and its presentation is top class.

The menu offers Makis, Nigiris and Sashimis, along with a mixed vegetable sushi and different children's dishes. Japanese noodles with chicken, vegetables or Tiger prawns, fish or miso soup, seafood or beef salad round out the main courses. For desert, there is chocolate cake with cream, ice cream and fresh berry smoothies.

The restaurant is open from 11:30 am to 11 pm. Take-away meals can be ordered by phone or on the web. They cater for companies, parties and lunches, too.

**Sushimiðjan**

-ASF



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 www.sushimidjan.is



This summer, Café Haiti will be extending its menu to include authentic French crepes, both savoury and sweet. Served on the terrace, I can just imagine that lovely warm aroma of hot crepes, that will undoubtedly draw in the crowds. As the evening sun sets across Faxaflói Bay, be sure to pop in to Café Haiti on a weekend night to catch the sounds of live music by local singers and musicians who offer a variety of both homegrown and more exotic sounds of distant lands. A definite must this summer in Reykjavík.

# BRIGHT SUMMER NIGHTS

*The Coffee Hot Spot of Reykjavik at the Old Harbour*

Café Haiti is an unpretentious little café that serves up a great cup of coffee, from beans roasted fresh every morning right on the premises. Here you can start your day with an excellent latte or cappuccino, along with a croissant or two; for this is one of the few places in the area that opens for breakfast - 8.30 to be precise.

The relaxed atmosphere is also a favourite with locals for lunch - quiche, fish and vegetable soups served with fresh bread. More fish dishes are slated to be added to the menu - Icelandic plokkfiskur (a traditional Icelandic thick fish stew), a delicious cod tartare, smoked salmon on toast, and a good solid 'catch of the day' dish.

**Café Haiti**

-EMV



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# THE BRAVE GET THE BEST

*The Sea Baron's Fish Meals attract visitors from all over the world*

Iceland has many 'different' foods which have their roots in seafaring history. The Vikings came up with many novel ways of preserving their foods and their traditions continue to this day.

Some of these foods sound unappealing, to say the least, and it takes the adventurous soul to step out and try them. Iceland is for the adventurous and they reap the benefits of the brave. The timid stick to burgers!

## A True Fisherman

A former fisherman and Coast Guard chef, Kjartan Halldórsson, also known as the Sea Baron, is the master of unusual fish dishes. His lobster soup, for example, has gained fame around the world, earning it the title

of 'the world's greatest lobster soup'. While he doesn't reveal the secrets of his recipe, that doesn't stop his restaurant from being filled every day with afficianados.

He entered the restaurant business by chance. One day, when standing by his boxes of fish, some foreign visitors asked if he could prepare some fish for them. Spotting an opportunity, he ran to the nearest hardware store to buy a grill—and was in business! His visitors were invited to dine in his shop in this improbable restaurant. Word quickly spread and soon he was shifting his boxes out of the way to make room for tables and chairs.

He took the unusual and created delicious meals that no-one else had thought of trying. He took old recipes, some of

which sounded revolting, and from them, made meals that have established his reputation around the world.

Kjartan's restaurant is popular with the fishermen who sailed for many years from Reykjavik. It is filled with memorabilia donated by old sea captains and their families, that fill it with a character all its own. Handmade model sailing boats, pictures of ships of the past and stuffed birds fill the second floor's walls, where groups of up to 35 can celebrate together and where the fishermen used to sleep when coming to land.

## Dining as a Seafaring Experience

Eating at the polished tables, sitting on cushioned fish barrels, surrounded by paraphernalia of the sea, is an experience that will leave you with both good memories, a satisfied appetite—and perhaps, a rather shocked mind that you would actually have eaten fermented fish and that it tasted so, so good.

## Smoked in Succulence

A true pioneer, Kjartan is always coming up new ideas. Besides the smoked eel, Kjartan has taken to smoking mackerel and the special grey halibut, the delicious flat fish with both eyes on top. His technique imbibes the fish with a delicious flavour that has to be tasted to be believed.



-ASF

**Sægreifinn**



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 www.sægreifinn.is

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# JEWELS & ART BY THE SEA

Sædís hand crafts jewellery in her studio at the Old Harbour



For centuries, jewellery has had a special place in the heart. An object of art and beauty, a gift of love to be treasured. To find craftsman-made jewellery is a rarity in today's mass-produced world.

Sædís creates designs that range from the most feminine to pieces for both men and women. They evoke images of Iceland's most distinct symbols, nature and pure water.

Sædís, whose name means 'Goddess of the Sea', works with all the precious metals, which she combines with gemstones, blue, appropriately, being her favourite and Icelandic stones like the lava stone. Her respect for the environment and a strong emphasis on quality is evident in all aspects of her work. She uses green practices in choosing her elaborately handcrafted materials and fair trade stones.



## Custom-made Beauty

Sædís also makes pieces embodying the wishes of clients using whatever metal they request, making a unique and precious gift from the heart.

She also sells quality fish leather products and fine art pieces by significant Icelandic artists.

You'll find her creations for sale online at [saedis.etsy.com](http://saedis.etsy.com) and through her website, where you can order from abroad but if you're in Reykjavík, a visit to her open workshop and gallery is a worthwhile experience.

Sædís the Jeweller

-ASF



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# EAT THAI IN ICELAND

Delicious Downtown Thai Dishes at Krua Thai

Down by the Old Harbour in the centre of Reykjavík is a restaurant that serves such good Thai food that visitors from Thailand and groups know to go there. All the key ingredients are imported straight from Thailand to be cooked by experienced Thai chefs. This results in that genuine experience of a truly delicious meal, which is so enjoyable.

A full range of Thai meals with a wide range of options is available, each being made to order and freshly cooked on the spot.

The restaurant itself lends authenticity to the experience, being decorated in traditional Thai style.

Take-away and home delivery are available. There is a second branch close to the Smáralind



shopping centre, one in Grafavogur and one in Akureyri, called Krua Síam.

After having lived many years in Thailand, I can attest to the range and taste of Krua Thai's dishes. It is definitely my restaurant of choice when dining out, Thai food being my favourite.

Krua Thai

-ASF



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# VOLCANO HOUSE ROCKS

*New food, new music and new tours*

If this is your first time in Iceland, a visit to Volcano House will provide you with a splendid overview of how volcanic activity has moulded and shaped Icelandic society and its impact on the country as a whole. Icelanders, after all, have always had to deal with ever unpredictable mother nature, who usually has the last word in the matter of how one plans one's day or, as the case may be, one's life.

## Cinema on Fire

In the heart of Volcano House lies a small paying cinema that features two 20-minute documentaries chronicling two of Iceland's most notorious volcanoes of the last 40 years.

The first film takes you back to the 1973 eruption in the Westman Islands. The real protagonists in this volcanic drama however, are the Icelanders themselves, who managed to evacuate all 5,000 residents from the island in just a few hours in the middle of that fateful night.

The second film covers the recent eruption of Fimmvörðuháls and Eyjafjallajökull, in all its fiery splendour and glory, which will undoubtedly leave you with a better understanding of what brought most of Europe's air traffic to a standstill just a few years ago. The accompanying dramatic

music and breathtaking aerial photography contributes all the more to this riveting documentary's impact and power.

## Café with all the best ingredients

Volcano House is also known as a late-night café where you can order a proper espresso or cappuccino, teas, hot chocolate, or try a cold Icelandic beer or a shot of Brennivín. Time-honoured Icelandic cakes served with whipped cream and skyr desserts are baked on the premises. Check out the new menu which includes hearty and warming plokki (a creamy white fish stew with potatoes) or the langoustine (mini-lobster) soup, both served with traditional rye bread. There's even that curious combination of cheese toast with jam, that has been a much loved national snack for generations of Icelanders.



## A little night music at Volcano House

Musical evenings of Icelandic folk tunes as well as more modern sounds by various local musicians are planned for weekend evenings between June and August. Pop in for a listen and browse Volcano House's interesting hands-on collection of volcanic ash and rock, semi-precious stones from East Iceland and volcano-themed souvenirs.

## Book a Volcano Tour

Lastly, now that your curiosity is piqued, it's time to book a tour to see any one of Iceland's magnificent volcanoes. Volcano House has recently teamed up with leading tour guides and agencies to offer you a variety of volcano tours around the country that you can book right at Volcano House.

-EMV

### Volcano House



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and thousands of which have already nested in these islands.

The 'Andrea' is the biggest whale watching ship in Iceland; thus it is very stable, comfortable and—most importantly—has excellent viewing decks, providing you with a great sailing experience. Guests can have a nice cup of coffee or hot chocolate indoors or borrow a sweater to wear outdoors on colder days.



### Notes from a guide's diary

According to the guide's diary to be found on Life of Whales website, the beginning of June was really exciting on the bay. One day, for example, a minke whale stayed with the ship for awhile during a thick fog, a description one normally only encounters in mystic fairy tales! Another entry tells of some harbour porpoises competing with minke whales to show off only ten metres from the ship in front of the eager human audience.

Yet another entry tells of a playground of minke whales, a group of five staying a secure 60 metres distance from the ship, while a group of three others dared to come much closer, surfacing at the same time in the same direction. This same tour also witnessed some dolphins, mothers and calves alike jumping out of the water and turning in the air. Whales are just like us humans, some of them are more suspicious, keeping their distance from the ship while others are more daring, playing along and perhaps even communicating with us!

### Make your visit complete

Staring at the unbelievable sight of a whale surfacing from the sea is something one should not miss while staying in Iceland. On board the 'Andrea', you are provided with both the comfort and facilities to enjoy that experience to the fullest.

## LIFE OF WHALES

*Watch whales, porpoises and dolphins from the 'Andrea'*

**W**hales and humans coexist harmoniously in Faxaflói bay in these first sunny days of summer. The whales have been playing and enjoying riding along Life of Whales' ship 'Andrea', while the humans enjoy the view of these magnificent animals.

The whales by the shores of Iceland, are without a doubt, some of the most spectacular sights Iceland has to offer. Four types of whales live in Faxaflói bay, which makes them quite accessible from Reykjavík. Those species are: the Minke whales, White-Beaked Dolphins, Harbour Porpoises and Humpback Whales.



### Tour the bay on a stable ship

Life of Whales is a small family company, which runs three tours a day from the old harbour in Reykjavík, each one lasting three hours. In addition to the whalewatching,

they visit the puffin islands in the bay, where one can easily see the peculiar puffin among other seabirds, hundreds



-NHH

**Life of Whales**



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## BEST WAY TO SEE THE CITY

*Reykjavik Bike Tours' original way to see Reykjavik is also the best*

If you're in good health and know how to balance a bicycle, you'll enjoy riding with one of Reykjavik Bike Tour's entertaining and professional guides. They offer bicycle tours and rentals in Reykjavik all year. In summer, they also do day trips out of town in a minibus with a bicycle combination to places not to be missed.

### No. 1 on Trip Advisor

Reykjavik Bike Tours has enjoyed top position on the Trip Advisor social traveller website for the past three years. It is Ursula and Stefan's family business, founded in 2009. Travellers appreciate the friendly welcome, knowledgeable guides, the outdoor activity and excellent quality bicycles.

### Classic Reykjavik Tour – 2.5 hrs / 7 km

This tour is the perfect introduction to the capital city of Iceland and is offered all year. You can expect to see some of the city's hidden secrets while learning about its history from a professional and enthusiastic local tourist guide. You get to know what the city is all about – in terms of its history, best museums, best restaurants, current special events and much, much more. Perhaps the most important aspect of this tour, apart from the exercise, of course, is the direct access to the local guide giving the tour.

### Holiday Bicycle Tour

Reykjavik Bike Tours offers one scheduled tour in winter, and five scheduled tours in summer; two in the city, and three which

require the assistance of a minibus and trailer. Combine all five and you've got yourself a holiday bicycle tour.

The two city tours are the Classic Reykjavik – 2.5 hrs / 7 km, and the Coast of Reykjavik – 2.5 hrs / 18 km. The Classic tour has plenty of stops and is quite easy for anyone in good health. The Coast tour is also fairly easy but covers more than twice the distance of the Classic tour.

The three tours that involve the use of a minibus and trailer are: Golden Circle & Bike – 8 hrs / 25 km; Westman Isles & Bike – 9 hrs / 11 km and Blue Lagoon & Bike – 8 hrs / 18 km. For more information, please visit Reykjavik Bike Tour's website.

*Ursula and Stefan love what they do and receive every visitor with a friendly smile.*

-SHV



Reykjavik Bike Tours



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the presidential residence weekly and occasionally dining in-house. Úlfar Eysteinnsson and family bought the restaurant in 1989 and opened in the very last days of the beer prohibition. Úlfar kept the peculiar name, a name with dual reference to a long trench coat and the previous owners, two Frenchmen and a Frenchman's wife.



## A TASTE OF THE GOOD LIFE

*Bringing French and Icelandic cuisine together in Þrír Frakkar*

On a little corner in the little big city in the North is a small haven for the food lover. Behind the beautiful rouge exterior of Þrír Frakkar með Úlfar is a romantic dining room, small and intimate, like a French bistro in the Parisian Saint Michel, yet rich in Icelandic heritage through chef Úlfar Eysteinnsson's artful fusion of French and Icelandic cuisine using primarily fresh Icelandic produce.

Specialising in fresh fish and known for his superb skills in creating rich flavours and a tender texture to seafood, Úlfar has earned a reputation as one of Iceland's most skilled chefs, marrying local traditions and fine French cuisine.

Úlfar's list of prestigious clientele is long and President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson is a regular customer, ordering take away to

Þrír Frakkar með Úlfar is truly one of Reykjavík's hidden gems where fine dining and Icelandic family values come together in a feast for the palate!

**Þrír Frakkar** -JB



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 www.3frakkar.com



## LEATHER DESIGNER

*Ladies handbags, earrings and necklaces*

Quality Icelandic design and leather handcraft is much sought after. "My first leather design was a handbag painted with colourful artwork and patterns," says Guðrún Stefánsdóttir, a successful independent architect who found a second career in creative leather designs. Guðrún designs leather handbags and now she's added necklaces and earrings to her Ark Art

accessory collection. "I wanted to use the leather cut-offs for something useful, when I came up



with the idea to use them to make jewellery—earrings and necklaces."

Guðrún's Ark Art leather jewellery is recognisable by her use of thin leather rings or squares and use of colours. It is a sophisticated yet simple design, skilfully using geometric shapes and colours.

Guðrún graduated from the Royal School of Architecture in Denmark in 1986. After working at an architect's office, she started her own business. "I've worked on some amazing projects, ranging from large buildings to single family homes. My favourite projects are those where I design everything from A-Z for private homes. Those projects would typically involve the house and interior design, the landscaping around the house and the furniture inside."

The Ark Art collection is available at the National Art Gallery, Sæðis jewellery shop at Reykjavík's Old Harbour and directly from Guðrún.

**Arkart** -NHH



Drágháls 10 • 110 Reykjavík  
**+354 551 5533**  
 arkgunna@simnet.is  
 www.arkart.is

# THE AESTHETIC WONDERLAND

*The little Christmas shop that is festive all year round*

Anne Helen, owner of 'The Little Christmas Shop' on Reykjavik's main shopping street, Laugavegur, is what you might call a 'one woman wonder'. When she lost her job in tourism ten years ago, she decided it was time for a change and turned to doing what she does better than most of us; making the world a prettier place, one Christmas ball at a time.



## In the Land of Eternal Christmas

Anne Helen, a genuine aesthete, says she has always had somewhat of a Christmas frenzy and an intense passion for things of beauty. She never goes for anything average but hunts for things of quality that truly stand out. Though she imports merchandise from all over Europe, her ambition is to specialise in Icelandic handiwork and ornaments. She already has an extensive collection for sale, most made exclusively for her by artists, each having a distinctive approach and working in materials as different as wool, glass and clay. In addition to customary Christmas ornaments, she includes local folklore figures, like the thirteen Santas and the Christmas Cat.



Anne Helen loves to tell customers about Icelandic Christmas traditions. Visitors often stop by simply because they've



heard of her hospitality and the shop's friendly atmosphere. They rarely leave empty handed. After all, placing an Icelandic Santa on your Christmas tree every year is a great way to remember your visit to Iceland.

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-HP

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## REYKJAVIK'S LIVING MUSEUM

*Árbæjarsafn museum is designed to educate and entertain all ages*

Imagine a museum that welcomed children to participate in the exhibition and to play with loose artefacts. Even better, imagine an exhibition entirely designed for children. The Árbæjarsafn museum, established in 1957 on the local farm, Árbær, which was on Reykjavik's outskirts at the time, is uniquely designed for children. Progressive in its vision, the interactive museum caters to families. They can see the very houses families of old used to call home. With more than two dozen reconstructed buildings to choose from, children are free to run from house to house, roll in the grass and play with the museum's vast collection of toys.

### Do Touch!

The best place to start is in the former church and sports hall, Landakot. The child-size

dollhouses are lined up along the wall with each one dedicated to a specific period in time, starting in a farmhouse from 1910, to an urban home in the 1930's, to the new technology of the 1970's and 1990's. The most popular corner is the 1950's food market where children can play shop. The Altar of Toys at the far end of the exhibition is its most impressive feature.

The interactive time-travel experience of Landakot is intended to help children comprehend the vast changes from impoverished farming communities to videogames over time.

'Ekki Snerta Jörðina' or 'Don't Touch the Ground' is another interactive exhibition dedicated to children's games in 2012. The museum actively collects modern objects to document contemporary life for future exhibitions.



### Summer at Árbæjarsafn

Árbæjarsafn comes alive with livestock roaming the pastures in summer. A cow, sheep and rooster are among its summertime residents, giving the cluster of 26 buildings an air of historical authenticity.

In the re-constructed farmhouse of Árbær is a young lamb whose loud bleating echoes from the old turf farm to the top floor, where the family of Margrét Pétursdóttir would sleep alongside the hired hand, Magnús Hanson during his fifty years of service to the family.

The old church from Skagafjörður region is next door and could accommodate fifty or sixty people. The beautiful altar piece is from 1720 and to some, resembles 'The Last Supper' by Leonardo Da Vinci. The simple but beautiful church is perfect for a romantic country-style wedding.

-JB

**Árbæjarsafn**

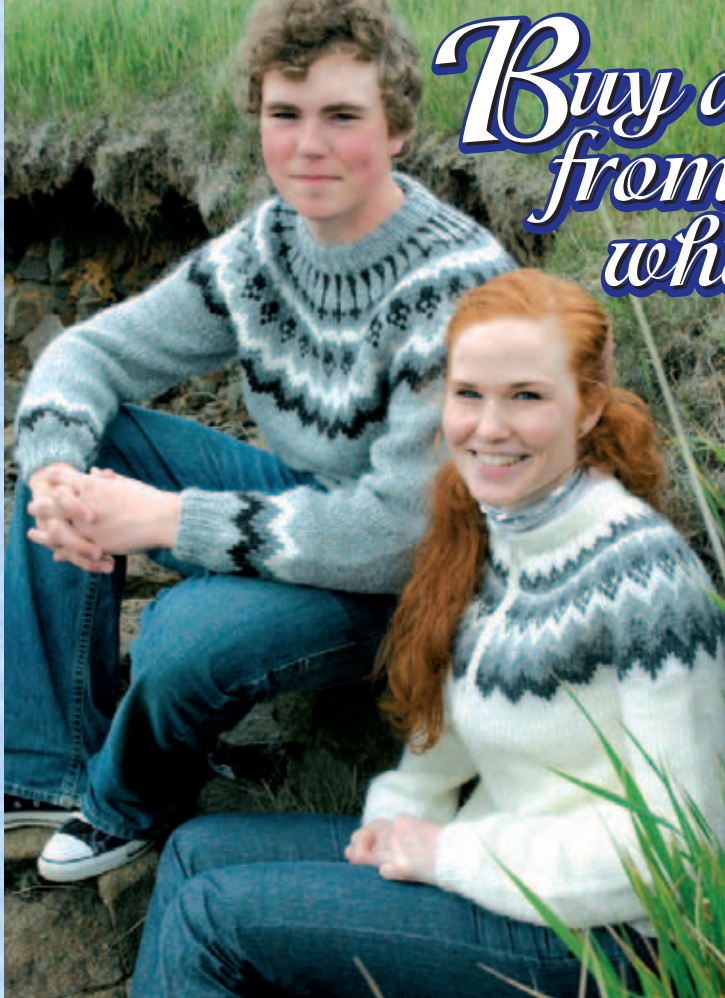



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## A GOURMET EXPERIENCE

### *Steaks and Style at Argentína Steakhouse*

Iceland is a land of secrets, waiting to be discovered. For those who love good food, wines and spirits, the only give-away is a flag hanging above two gates on a side-street just off Laugavegur's shopping street. Here, at the end of a dark hallway is a large wooden door with an ornate handle that opens into one of the most popular and respected restaurants in Iceland. Popular, that is, with people in the know. This hidden epicurean jewel has been sought out by visitors from all over the world for the past 22 years!

Argentína Steakhouse won the coveted 'Restaurant of the Year' award in 2000 with good reason. You are not just offered a meal, as this is not an 'eat-and-run restaurant' but an evening's gourmet experience. No matter what your choice from the menu, you are guaranteed a meal to remember for its presentation, flavour, texture and originality.

However, the meal is the culmination of that experience. Before anything touches your taste buds, your other senses are immersed in the rich leather and wood, the intimate lighting and atmosphere

of the rustic, Argentinean-style decor, the music and the tantalising aromas. Enjoying a drink from the large selection of fine wines and spirits stocked at the bar in front of the fire crackling in the hearth, relaxing in the comfortable chairs of one of the lounges, provides the perfect ambiance to the start of your evening.

Steaks are the hallmark of Argentína's cuisine. Icelandic beef is untouched by drugs, additives or steroids. They have been genetically unaltered over the 1,000 years since the first settlers. Allowed to grow slowly, they have developed just the right amount of fat necessary for the meat to grill perfectly and the muscles are finer, so the steak is succulent and tender. Icelandic lamb is renowned for its unspoilt, natural growth as they roam unrestrained in the mountain wilderness pastures, also free from additives or hormones, colouring or enhancers – and that shows in its tenderness and taste! Also on the menu is a wide range of carefully selected fresh seafood, shellfish and lobster, to provide a choice for every palate.

Char grilled to perfection, the steaks are complemented by the red and white wine selection from all the major countries and regions, or Champagne and sparkling wines, all served by attentive waiters and waitresses. The desert menu complements the main meal with its range of both Icelandic and international choices.

There is no incentive to rush out once you have finished your meal. There are plenty of comfortable couches and chairs in which to relax and enjoy an after-dinner glass of quality cognac, whiskey, port or liqueurs. Argentína is also the most popular venue to buy cigars, though the restaurant is now a smoke-free area.

Although the restaurant can seat up to 120 guests, including two banquet rooms that seat up to 16 and 20 guests respectively, Fridays and Saturdays should be booked in advance. It is open Sunday-Thursday from 6 pm to midnight and on Friday-Saturday from 5:30 pm to 1 am. (The kitchen closes 90 mins. before closing time.)



-ASF

**Argentína**

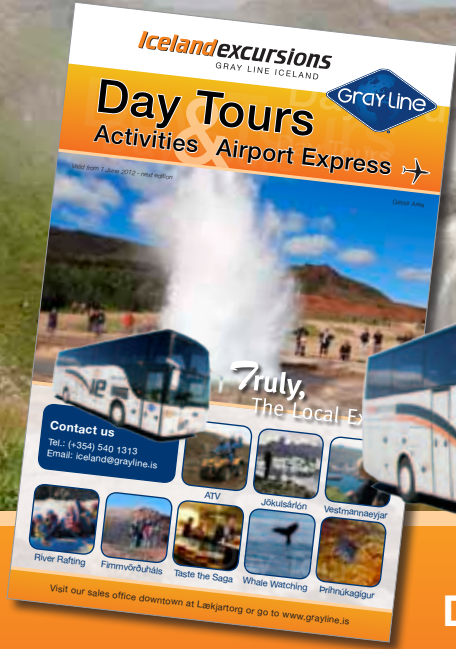


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### Drive Yourself with a Programme

The newest product is the U-drive car rental package, using the modified Land Rover Defenders of their sister company Isak. You can travel around the highlands by yourself using pre-arranged routes in the GPS devices, a detailed programme and pre-booked accommodation.

### Gifted Guiding

With an exception of the U-Drive tours, both the tailored and scheduled tours are conducted by excellent driver guides and Isafold Travel focusses on finding the right guide for each group.

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## TOURS TAILORED TO TASTE

*Isafold Travel offers flexible tours to fit your wishes*

**I**safold Travel was founded 1997 as a family based company, which is run by Jón Baldur Thorbjörnsson. The word 'Isafold' is a poetic name for Iceland. The company has now grown up to be a dynamic all-round tour operator, still focusing on tailored private tours for small groups.

The team of Isafold Travel strongly believes in the advantage of small groups, resulting in more flexibility, more personal service and higher customer satisfaction. It's quite a challenge to 'invent the wheel' every time a new tour is created, however the Isafold Team loves creativity!

### Tailored for Season and Style

Isafold Travel offers a selection of guided scheduled tours that take individual bookings. The company guarantees departure with a minimum of 2 persons and normally not exceeding a maximum of 10.

There are a variety of themes offered. For example, there is the culinary tour 'Taste of Iceland', summer and winter family tours, various photography tours, authentic tours with the best seller, 'Iceland Break' and finally 'Winter Trophy', a challenging highland adventure operated in modified 4x4 ISAK's.



tyres for increased flotation for driving on snow, sand or on other soft surfaces, just by deflating the tyres as far down as one tenth of the normal pressure in extreme situations. Then the wonder happens: the footprint of the Defender will be less deep than a footprint of someone standing alongside it.

### Equipped for the Extreme

Apart from the construction modifications, every Defender is equipped with an air compressor, ice bumper, snorkel and a VHF radio for communication between the vehicles—along with a shovel and a rope, of course.

### Challenge yourself and the Country

Isak 4x4 rental opens up a unique and challenging way to experience Iceland by driving a superjeep, either individually rented, on guided convoy tours, on scheduled challenging winter tours or on explorative U-Drive Tours in the summer.

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*Isak 4x4 Rental has specially modified Land Rovers for any conditions*

**O**n the summer solstice in 2012, it will be 5 years since the innovative Isak 4x4 rental was established. Isak was the first car rental in Iceland to offer exclusively modified 4x4's for individual rental and self drive purposes. The rental accommodates the many requests by individuals and

incentive groups to drive a modified SUV, which the Icelanders call a 'Superjeep'.

### Drive where others cannot go

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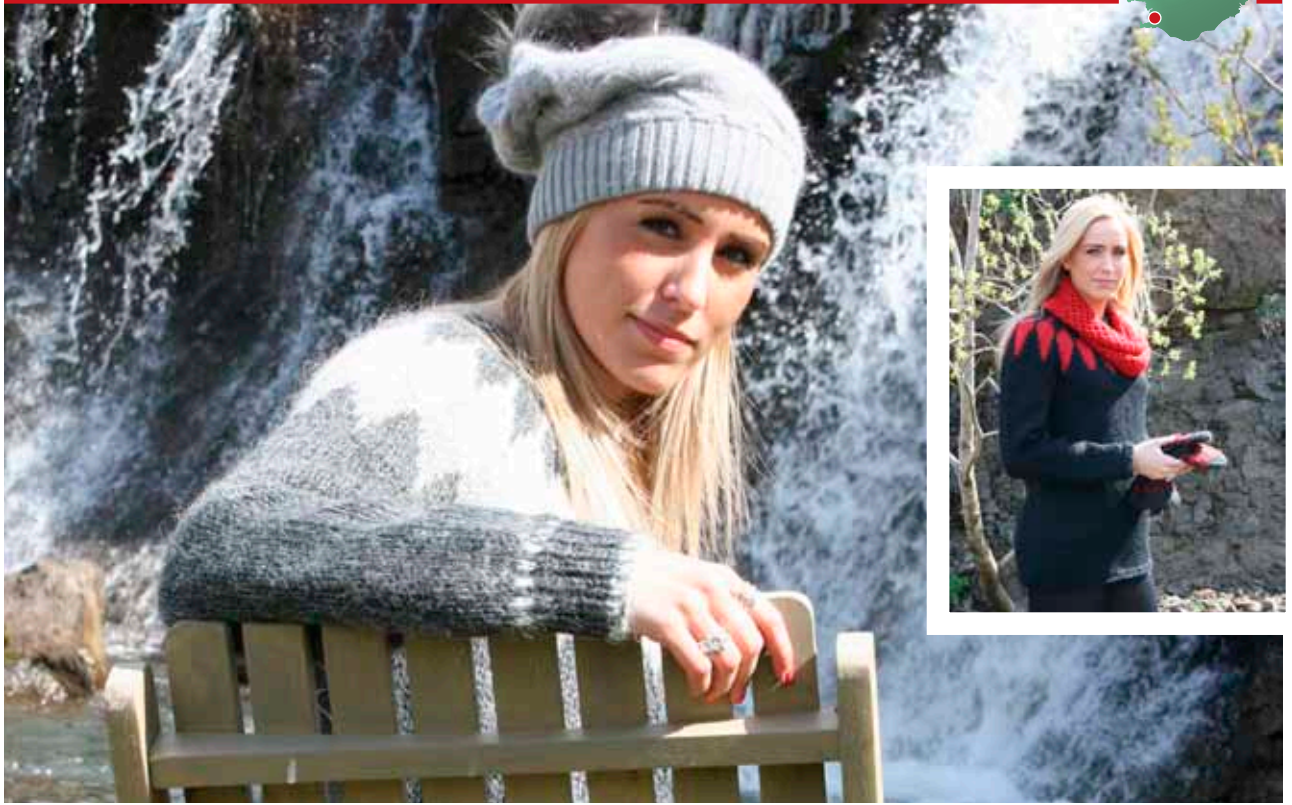


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## THE WARMTH OF ÁLAFOSS

*A famous wool centre has turned into a vibrant community*

A community epitomising Icelanders' penchant for creativity and innovation, art and design has formed around a beautiful waterfall on the edge of Mosfellsbær.

The river was formerly warm, earning it the name 'Varmá' (Warm River) and in 1896, an enterprising farmer established a knitting factory that was famous for almost 100 years, producing woollen goods.

It's less than 20 mins. from Reykjavik and only 25 mins. to Þingvellir (Thingvellir) National Park. The Laxnes Horse Farm and Halldór Laxnes' house are only 10 mins. away. Hótel Laxnes and the Fitjar Guest House are a mere 5 mins.

### The Álafoss Wool and Sewing Shop

The Álafoss factory has been turned into a shop with a warm atmosphere and wide range of interesting articles from past and present. They sell everything associated with wool, from the yarn to the beautiful, multicoloured finished articles, from patterns to buttons and zippers. Hand-knitted articles from individuals all across the country hang side-by-side with machine-made woollen clothing—all at really good prices. Additionally, there are ranges of

beautiful artistic jewellery, glassware, pottery and silverware to choose from.

Álafoss is a fascinating place. As you browse, you are surrounded by historical and technical exhibits from its past.

### Ásgarður Handwork Shop

Across the road from the shop, disabled artisans have produced a range of handmade wooden toys and lifestyle designs since 1993. They emphasise the development of simple, strong and beautiful toys, based on Rudolf Steiner's philosophy, taking Icelandic wood and creating unique works that you can take home.

### The Swimming Pool Recording Studio

Another example of Icelanders' ingenuity is the old swimming pool, originally built in

1931 that fell into disuse. It has been transformed into the state-of-the-art 'Sundlaugin Recording Studio', by the internationally famous Sigur Rós band, and used by a stream of musicians since.

### Kaffihúsið á Álafossi

The Kaffihúsið á Álafossi is a coffee house and restaurant but also an art gallery. In addition to their private collection, works by

a different artist each month are displayed and are available for purchase. It is very child-friendly and a popular place to sit on a summer's day—which, of course, lasts till late in the evening—and enjoy a wide range of snacks, cakes, meals\* and drinks, including beer and stronger drinks which can be enjoyed on the veranda or the balcony that overlooks the waterfall and river, with the tranquil hills beyond.



The Kaffihúsið can accommodate groups of up to 50. It is a hive of activity and a place to meet people from the locality, staying open until 10 pm and to 11 pm on Thursdays-Saturdays. You can find their news on Facebook.

\*Meat dishes consist of fish, lamb or chicken.

-ASF

Álafoss Wool Store



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### The Patience of a Master

Sometimes, materials will require special treatment if they are to last and that can take time. Some woods need to dry slowly or they will split. Others, such as the fossilized tree he pulled from the water that was turning into brown coal, need more patient treatment. In this case, he wrapped it in plastic and for the next 6 years, he daily pricked a tiny hole in the covering to let just a bit more air in to dry it. Had he done it faster, it would have splintered and crumbled to dust. Such is the thought and care applied to each individual material that each handle stands out as carrying the touch of a master craftsman, a quality much sought-after.



## CONNOISSEUR'S DELIGHT

*Hand-made knives by Palli are treasured across the world*

Carefully carved out of diligently researched and prepared materials, often rare and always unusual, Palli's knives are now found in at least 85 countries of the world. When he makes a special knife, there can be quite a competition to own it.

### Born from enthusiasm

Palli started carving knife handles over 25 years ago as a personal hobby. He enjoyed finding unusual materials to create the handles and took delight in carving each one carefully to match the individual blades.

### Under the blade

Visit his workshop and you will most likely find yourself seated right under a collection of blades magnetically held to a bar on the ceiling above you. None has fallen yet! A true craftsman, he always chooses the best blades, sourcing them from as far away as Pakistan. Others come from blacksmith in Denmark. Factory made blades come from Norway, Sweden and Germany. They are either made from fine Damascus steel, stainless steel or single high carbon steel: which keeps its sharp edge the best.

### Nature's provision

What is special about these handles? Palli loves to wander the countryside, looking for new materials for his handles. Often, he will blend different materials together to form a composite handle that, when carved, will be unique. A horse's hoof, a reindeer's antler, a goat's horn, a hippo's tooth, elm, fossilized wood, ebony or even different Icelandic stones - these are but a few of the materials he uses to create a handle. Whilst most are found within Iceland's shores, his search also takes him to many different parts of the world.

### Custom or catalogue - all are unique

Because each knife is hand made, it is a unique creation. He does have a catalogue but the images are just samples, as no knives are completely identical. He loves the challenge of experimenting with new materials. A 65 year-old dentist drill is pressed into use for intricate carvings. They can be ordered online or, in Iceland, can be found at Brynja, the handyman shop on Laugarvegur 29, Reykjavik's main shopping street and at his workshop in Mosfellsbær. It's worth the 15 minute trip there (from down town Reykjavík) to see the environment from which he draws his inspiration in his workshop next to the Álafoss waterfall.



Palli the Knife Maker



Alafossvegur 29 - 270 Mosfellsbær  
+354 899 6903  
palli@knifemaker.is  
www.knifemaker.is

-ASF



piece one of a kind, a unique blend of art and nature.

Karen, having a keen artistic eye, also makes jewellery and ornaments from seashells and decorative pearls, which make great presents. Also, their little heart-shaped stones, small enough to fit into a child's hand, and their funny little 'houses' are wonderful souvenirs. After all, what could be more perfect to bring home with you than a small piece of Iceland in your pocket?



## YOUR OWN PIECE OF ICELAND

*Art and nature collide at Gallery Front*

In soothing closeness to the sea and nature, artists Valdís and her daughter, Karen, have made their long term dream come true. At their gorgeous home, by the shores of Kjalanes, they have opened a gallery, selling their distinctive craftwork made mostly from stones found on the slopes of the nearby mountain and on the beach by their doorstep.

Valdís, who has been fascinated by stones since childhood and is an avid collector,

says they constantly look for stones shaped in a way that allows them to transform them simply by painting them.

The stones, elaborately painted in beautiful colours, take on a whole new life, and become their own element. The brilliant thing is that they don't change the shape of the stones in any way, their natural form drives the creative process and the final outcome, making each

Gallery Front

-HP



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receive GPS-based guidance, information and/or articles with built-in Apps.

Trawire offers several add-on features, such as a children's package with videos and games to help time pass quickly while travelling. The iPad can also be attached to the back of the seat in front.

The business pack is ideal for conference attendees and business travellers who want to travel light. Trawire provides all needed applications to keep updated on business developments, news and contacts at home and help organise events and schedules while visiting Iceland.

*Order a Trawire iPad online and it can be waiting for you upon arrival or collected at chosen locations*

Trawire was inspired by gifted, autistic children who function better in the modern world using iPads. Trawire's policy is to 'give back' by sponsoring autistic children.

## TRAVEL IN TOUCH

*Rent an iPad from Trawire to guide your Icelandic travel and business*

Iceland is very well connected. 2G mobile coverage covers the whole country and 3G reaches towns, villages, most coastal areas and some of the interior. There are Wi-Fi hotspots in practically every inhabited spot.

Now you can stay in touch with friends and family and up-to-date with news or business. Trawire has launched an innovative iPad rental plan to help you get the most from your visit. As you travel within Iceland, you

**Trawire** -ASF



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## A NEW MEMORY EACH MONTH

*Snerra Publishing introduces the 2012 selection*

Once you've returned home from your trip to Iceland, you'll undoubtedly want to have something to remember it by. Having a new picture from Iceland on your wall every month is surely one of the better ways to do it. Snerra publishing company is now presenting a new selection of calendars for the year 2012 – a souvenir which is not only nice to look at but also practical and informative.

The 2012 selection is especially extensive, with 'The Icelandic Calendar', which includes pictures of the landscape, towns and people of Iceland in all four seasons; 'This is Iceland' offering glimpses of the Icelandic way of life; 'Experience Iceland' focussing on the powerful forces of nature at work in Iceland; 'The Panoramic Desk Calendar'; 'The Icelandic Horse Calendar and the ever popular Puffin Calendar. The Nature Calendar is new this year with drawings by award winning artist, Jón Baldur Hlíðberg.

You can keep up with what's going on in Iceland as the official Icelandic holidays are marked on the calendars - so you'll know when to celebrate Iceland's Independence Day and when to start eating putrefied shark and soured liver sausages.



**Snerra Publishing** -ASF



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## DUTY FREE

*Up to 50% off City Prices in the Arrivals Duty Free Store*

Frequent flyers know the ropes. They get through Passport Control and Customs and head to the Duty Free stores. They need to think—are they entitled or not? Then, laden with bags, they struggle to the plane, shoving their precious cargo into already-overstuffed overhead lockers. At the end of their flight, they lug the same bags down miles of walkways, stairs and escalators, before picking up their luggage and struggling to the taxis, coaches or trains, hoping they don't drop or break the bottles on the way.

### Iceland - a Different Way

The Vikings do things differently. At the International Airport at Keflavik, you will find a rare opportunity: a Duty Free Store in the Arrivals section, right at the luggage pick-up point, where there are trolleys available. Mere feet from the luggage carousels, passengers can do their shopping at huge discounts

compared to city prices, especially on wines, spirits and tobacco products. Before their luggage arrives, they can have their shopping done and save a lot of money.

### Don't lug it with you - get it here

Opened in 1970, the Arrivals Duty Free Shop was an immediate success. In the airport expansion in 2008, it was expanded to accommodate a much larger range of international and Icelandic brands. The expansion provided the opportunity to offer a very good selection of products - often far better than other airports and even downtown.

Today, it has the largest range of wines, spirits and beers in the country—larger, even, than many other countries' airports—and it includes the international award-winning Egils Gull. Cosmetics, confectionery, tobacco products, toys and electronic products—including DVD titles are all available

at discounted prices, so it is an ideal opportunity to take advantage of the lower prices before starting your visit. Here you will find all the top brands at knock-down prices. Think of it as a holiday discount!

Icelanders don't mind which country you're coming from or going to: the Duty Free discount applies equally to all. You don't need to worry about buying Icelandic currency first - all major cards are accepted.

### Go Home well stocked

Of course, most of the things you buy in the Arrivals Duty Free will probably be finished by the end of your visit and you will be looking for something special to remember your trip and for gifts to loved ones and children.

There is also a large Duty Free Store in the Departure Lounge. Duty Free fashion clothing by Burberry and Boss and a special range of clothing by Icelandic designers, such as Kronn are on sale. In addition, there is a special store for those uniquely Icelandic items that make perfect gifts and souvenirs that is worth paying a visit.

Unlike most other modern airports, the walk to the plane is short and trolleys can carry the load almost to the planes. Passengers from non-Schengen countries do not even have to walk to the Departure Lounge as there is a shop close to their planes with the same products and prices.

-ASF



Duty Free



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# SAIL WITH CHARCOT

See what life was like on the polar pioneer's ship in Sandgerði

Jean-Baptiste Charcot was born in 1867. He took an old soapbox when he was 3 years old, scrawled "Pourquoi Pas?" on its side and set sail—in the garden pool! It sank, leaving him wet but undaunted!

French society was too superficial for him. In 1892, aged 25, he bought his first ship and sailed north to the Shetlands, Hebrides, Faroes and Iceland.

His father died the following year, leaving him a large inheritance, allowing him to leave medicine behind for a life of scientific investigation and sea-faring adventure.

On his first trip to the Antarctic, he charted more than 600 miles of new Antarctic coastline

and islands. Another, equally successful expedition followed. Scott of the Antarctic nicknamed him, 'The Gentleman of the Pole'.

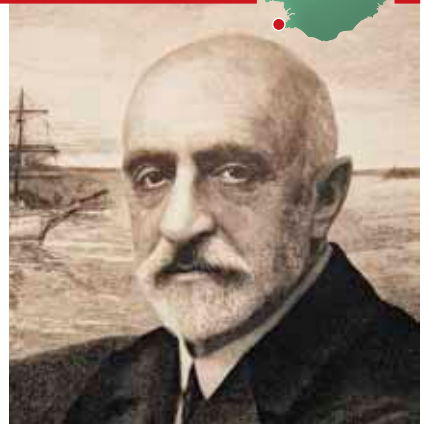
After the 1st World War, he led expeditions to the Færoe Islands, Jan Mayen Island, Iceland and Greenland. The 'Pourquoi Pas?' was a scientific research vessel with a library and three laboratories on board.

The ship stopped often in Iceland, where Charcot made many friends, including the eminent Icelandic naturalist, Bjarni Sæmundsson. When the 'Pourquoi Pas?' put into Reykjavik to repair its boiler, they had a meeting that was to prove to be their last.

## Disaster in the Bay

The ship set sail on the 16<sup>th</sup> September, 1936, heading for France, when a sudden, very violent storm drove them off course, across the Faxaflói Bay onto the rocks. Of the crew of over 40 souls, only one survived. The news shocked all Iceland and a memorial service was held in Reykjavik for them.

You can get an idea of what it was like on the 'Pourquoi Pas?' at the Suðurnes



University Research Centre in Sandgerði, where part of the ship has been reconstructed with many items from both the ship and Charcot's personal belongings on display.

This is a dramatic display that really gives a clear impression of life on board the ship and is well worth a visit to the centre, close to the harbour.

Sandgerðisbær



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## Guesthouse **BORG**

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## **KANTURINN** Bar & Restaurant

Vikings know how to enjoy themselves—the fishing community, especially. That makes Grindavík popular with tourists who want to experience the real culture of the country.

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## **Arctic Horses** Take a ride on the wild side



Arctic Horses offers horseback rides to the best destinations of the otherworldly Reykjanes Peninsula in southwestern Iceland and is the only stable riding near the geothermal Blue Lagoon Spa.

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# EXPERIENCE

*of a fishing town in a sea of history and activities*

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Linger over a glass of wine from Salthúsið's extensive wine list while listening to the soft ambient music in front of the wood-burning stove in the dining room that serves to warm and brighten those rainy days that are sometimes a part of life in Grindavík.

Aside from the á la carte evening menu, there is more casual fare for the lunch crowd, a café with free Internet access and a bar which is popular with the locals on weekends.

Salthúsið Restaurant, just 5 minutes drive from the internationally acclaimed Blue Lagoon, is housed in a warm and inviting log house, made of solid Estonian pine. The restaurant, spanning 2 floors, is an elegant venue for banquets, parties, conferences and reception dinners accommodating a total of 200 guests. The large premises can host conferences, workshops and meetings in 3 dining rooms, each with its own separate sound system, wireless Internet and an overhead projection system.

-EMV

## THE ART OF BACALAO IN GRINDAVÍK

*Salthúsið Restaurant takes this famous fish to a new level of taste*

Call it bacalao, salted cod, morue or saltfisk in Icelandic, the cod fish was so important to Iceland's economy that it featured prominently on the Icelandic Coat of Arms.

The Salthúsið (Salt House) Restaurant of Grindavík is the first restaurant in Iceland specialising in the lowly codfish, bringing it up to new heights.

Once the staple of the poor, bacalao has been a celebrated ingredient in

Mediterranean, African, and Caribbean cuisine for many centuries.

Benefiting from its proximity to the sea, Salthúsið's á la carte menu features beautifully presented seafood that couldn't be more fresh: whether it's cod, haddock or catfish or even lobster—it all depends on the 'catch of the day'. Not a fish lover? The menu also features items such as marinated fillet of lamb, beef tenderloin and BBQ ribs amongst others.

Salthúsið Restaurant



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+354 426 9700  
[salthusid@salthusid.is](mailto:salthusid@salthusid.is)  
[www.salthusid.is](http://www.salthusid.is)



# THE HEART OF REYKJANES

*Grindavík is surrounded by rare geological and historical sites*

**G**rindavík is a small community on the south coast of the Reykjanes peninsula with just under 3,000 inhabitants. Situated just 5 mins. from the magnificent Blue Lagoon and less than half an hour from Keflavík International airport, it is a perfect stopover.

The magnitude of the region’s natural landscape and geothermal activity draws Icelanders and travellers alike to this small community—so close to the capital city, yet a raw, lunar-like landscape, surrounded by the volatile North Atlantic Ocean.

The region is an area of fire and water and from Grindavík alone, tour operators Volcano Tours and Salty Tours offer travellers the

opportunity to explore the volcanic regions of Iceland, and Atv-Adventures tickle the fancy of spirited adventurers to explore the region on quads and mountain bikes.

Within the Reykjanes peninsula, Volcano Tours specialise in tours exploring the many wonders above the tectonic rift of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge on which this southwest tip of Iceland is situated. The geological history of the peninsula alone includes over 100 volcano craters, 200 lava tubes and 12 lavas, all within the last millennium.

Another great way to explore the region is on horseback. The only tour operator specialising in horse riding tours in the vicinity of the Blue

Lagoon is situated in Grindavík. Arctic Horses provide riding tours for both the experienced horse rider and the novice.

Local authorities and tour-companies work side by side to create an experience of a lifetime for travellers visiting the area. The next big step is the advancement of geo-tourism in the Reykjanes area, a project in which all the local communities participate.

Grindavík Experience is local initiative where the emphasis is placed on the geological history of the region as well as the region’s cultural heritage.

New pathways connecting Grindavík to the Blue Lagoon have been approved, soon enabling everyone to cycle or walk to the Blue Lagoon through the ancient lava fields of the peninsula.

Accommodation in Grindavík and its vicinity is available in all price ranges. For the easy-going traveller, the option is between a state-of-the art camping site and the Fiskanes Hostel. For the leisurely traveller, the Borg Guest House and the Arctic B&B provide good options to experience the warm comforts of Icelandic homes. Top of the range accommodation in the Grindavík area is supplied by the Northern Light Inn, the luxurious hotel a mere five minutes walking distance from the Blue Lagoon. To get even closer, the accommodation at the Blue lagoon Clinic Hotel includes access to the Blue Lagoon.

-JB



**Grindavíkurbær**

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# LIFE IS NEVER DULL HERE

*From the Blue Lagoon to a vibrant fishing harbour in Grindavík*

**L**ife in Grindavík revolves around the harbour. Its economy depends on fishing and fish exports to Europe, the Americas, Africa and Asia.

Today, the harbour entrance of Grindavík is treacherous but once inside, it's a feather bed to a modern fleet of trawlers. The waters have claimed the lives of hundreds of sailors since Grindavík's settlement in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. In former times, farmers-come-sailors heroically rowed for their lives while riding a large wave that would hopefully carry them and their vessel high enough onto the beach for them not to drown. Today, Grindavík is Iceland's third most important fishing town. Yet the town offers many attractions and activities for visitors.

## Lions Created the Blue Lagoon

We have Grindavík's Lions Club to thank for the creation of the now world-famous Blue Lagoon less than 5 minutes drive from the town. During the 70's oil crisis, the club facilitated explorations for hot water, drilling in the lava field north of the town in the hope of finding hot water to heat

the homes and businesses in Grindavík. The exploration revealed not only hot water but an immense pressure source for generating electricity. The Blue Lagoon is the most popular man-made attraction in Iceland and its mineral-rich saline water is said to have exfoliating, moisturising and rejuvenating properties for skin.

## Seaman's Day and the Happy Sailor

Seaman's Day is celebrated all over Iceland on the first Sunday in June each year and is an important event to Grindavík's 2,800 inhabitants. The town also has its own festival between Friday, 1<sup>st</sup> June and Sunday, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2012 called the "Happy Sailor". For three days, there are a stream of events ranging from sea angling in the harbour for the children to a 'pillow fight' for adults—which ends when one or all the participants end up in the sea.

## What to do in Grindavík

The modern geothermal swimming pool and waterslide are particularly popular with children. The Saltfish Museum covers



the history of salted cod and its export to Spain and Portugal early last century. The coastline is dotted with ship wrecks, each with explanatory signs. There are ample opportunities for bird watching and the hills and small mountains are ideal for hiking, cycling and quad biking. There are lighthouses and two geothermal power stations close by, resting on the lava fields.

Accommodation includes cosy guesthouses, a hostel and a recently improved campsite and caravan park near the harbour. There are restaurants and convenience stores to satisfy everyone's needs. -SV





floors could talk. About the only thing that might seem out of place is the plaster bust of John Lennon that is suspended from the ceiling and a large poster of the Beatle above the piano in the corner of the room. The owners are retired fishermen who just happen to be big Beatle fans!

When the weather allows, you can sit outside on the deck to sip your coffee, tea or glass of wine, or enjoy the cosy atmosphere inside where light lunches of soups and sandwiches or home-made cakes are served. On Wednesdays, the house specialty is a traditional lamb soup and on Fridays it's lobster soup, using the freshest ingredients, of course.

Every year, Café Bryggjan hosts its very own 'Cultural Week' with some of Iceland's well known poets, writers, and musicians, performing their works. And if you stick around long enough, someone may just strike up an old Beatle song on that piano in the corner!

**Café Bryggjan**

-EMV



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 www.kaffibryggjan.is

## THE FISHERMAN'S FRIEND

*Grindavík's cosy café culture*

What I love about Café Bryggjan is its solid authenticity in a town that has served as one of Iceland's most important fishing centres for the last 500 years. Located on the quay of Grindavík's harbour, the popular fishermen's café has an almost museum-like feel to it. It is decorated with an interesting variety of sea-related memorabilia. Photo after photo of retired fishing vessels line the walls. The well-worn wooden floor would no doubt have some stories to tell, if



Salty Tours' owner, Þorsteinn, is an expert guide. Visitors he takes on tours consistently give him rave reviews on sites like TripAdvisor.com because he takes them to see and do the unusual, sights commonly missed by tour groups but which are easily as inspiring and interesting. His commentaries alone are worth the trip.

Whether you plant your own tree or visit a rare goat farm, stand on the continental divide or enjoy the multi-coloured landscape around boiling mud pools, you will certainly have fascinating memories to take home—and, hopefully, plenty of film and photos to prove it to your friends. Yes, he can also take you to the Golden Circle, if you ask, but you'll miss the crowds and see them in a different light.

He'll pick you up from your hotel for a day you will not forget, leaving you with that, "Can we do that again?" question on your lips.

**Salty Tours**

-ASF



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## A DIFFERENT ICELAND

*Salty Tours takes you to places other tourists will miss*

Visiting Iceland is a thrill. Time is limited and you promise yourself to return and see more. Most people have heard of the Golden Circle tour encompassing a few of the country's highlights. However, there is so much more to this country of hidden secrets than this.



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# RARE SIGHTS OF REYKJANES

*A new road to sights unseen*

When you land at the International airport in Keflavik, you are just 45 min from the capital—and you'll no doubt want to be getting there as soon as you can, so you can get checked in and begin enjoying your holiday. Time is precious, but so is money, so you will probably want to save both from the start.

Iceland Excursions-Gray Line Iceland runs a very efficient Airport Express shuttle service in comfortable coaches that leave at regular intervals after each flight. Not only do you get a smooth trip directly to your hotel or guesthouse, but you get an idea of things to see.

There is a lot of history on the peninsula—not to mention so many wildlife and geological attractions that you'll have to come back here to discover.

On the left is the glittering ocean whilst to the right are the vast lava field, mountains and volcanos. You'll see the plumes of steam rising up from the



world-famous Blue Lagoon - one place you definitely need to visit.

After you have been safely delivered to your hotel, you might wonder what would be the best way to see these sights that are so unusual that your friends will think you Photoshopped your holiday pictures. There are many tours you can take but the area you've just passed through is one of the most worthwhile to explore more fully.

## **Tours to the Best Kept Secrets**

Iceland wasn't called 'Europe's best kept secret' for nothing! Experienced guides bring the tours to life, sharing fascinating history, anecdotes, folk tales and even scientific background and try to make each trip personal for every traveller.

This is one reason that Iceland Excursions-Gray Line Iceland offers guided tours to the area that take in all the fascinating sights and special attractions only found here such as the bridge between the continents at the junction of the tectonic plates. Iceland is a geologically young land and it's still stretching its muscles—as you'll see here.

The country you're visiting is still on fire in the basement, despite the lunar landscape, a result of old volcanic eruptions. There are still boiling mud pools, hot spots where steam rises freely from the waters, painting the surrounding rocks in surreal colours.





### Revealing Reykjanes

Visitors are increasingly recognising the value of the tours to these areas and there are two different tours available that cover the same ground. One (AH17) leaves at 9 am, after a pick-up from your hotel and includes time to bathe in the Blue Lagoon. The second tour (AH16) also goes to the Blue Lagoon, leaving at 1 pm, which doesn't allow time for bathing but includes all the same sights in this part of the Reykjanes peninsula. With a history going back to the earliest settlers, there is much to see and experience. The tour makes a short stop at the harbour of the fishing town of Grindavík, just 5 mins from the Blue Lagoon before heading off to the geothermal area at Seltún, with its bubbling, boiling mud pools.



there, the tour stops at Kleifarvatn lake, where bubbles stream up from fissures on the bottom, through the rocks and sand. This is a popular spot for divers and hikers. A quick check of YouTube videos will show why!

### Marine World and Geological Wonders

The third tour, (AH19), leaving at 8 am, takes you around the northern and western parts of the peninsula, visiting Sandgerði and taking in the marine sights, such as the

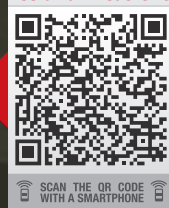
island of Eldey, weather permitting. There are very few spots in the world to see the tectonic plates splitting. At Sandvík, you'll be able to stand on two continents. The brightly coloured landscape offers a great variety of possibilities for the photographer.

### A spa before your flight

The tour ends at the Blue Lagoon, where you can bathe, continue with the AH16 tour, take a bus to the airport to catch your flight home or one to Reykjavik directly. This flexibility makes it a popular choice - as does a last tour before going to the airport and heading home.

ASF

#### Iceland Excursions



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The hotel overlooks the picturesque small boat harbour in Keflavik. Some of Keflavik's best walks and restaurants are nearby. A 7-minute drive to the International airport makes it a favourite choice with travellers who arrive in the country at night or depart early. You don't want a long trek after a tiring flight.



Many a visitor has commented that they wished they could have stayed longer, as they had enjoyed it so much—especially after they found they could see all the sights and enjoy the tours while basing from this quiet and comfortable hotel.

## I WISH I COULD STAY LONGER

*Peace, quiet, rest and relaxation in the comfort of Hotel Berg*

Since TripAdvisor.com awarded a Certificate of Excellence to Hotel Berg, you know it's a special place to stay. This small, new and homely hotel in Keflavik with its twelve spacious double rooms, is warm, pleasant and quiet. Close to the airport but you don't hear the planes.

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**Hótel Berg**

-ASF



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vegetables. Arriving steaming hot, served on a wooden platter, it was impressive and delicious.

Also on the menu: authentic Indian vegetable stews, pasta dishes and a range of fresh fish, lobster and all manner of seafood dishes. If you are not a seafood lover, the 'Grilled Trio of the House' - lamb fillet, beef and pork tenderloin, served with grilled vegetables and baked potato allows you to sample some of the best cuts of succulent Icelandic meat.



## HARBOUR DINING IN OLD KEFLAVIK

*Authentic Icelandic and international cuisine at Kaffi Duus*

It's the classic seafood restaurant setting overlooking Keflavik's small harbour. From our window seat, we are treated to a view of the deep blue waters of Faxaflói Bay and the snow capped mountains of Snæfjallness Peninsula on the horizon. A pair of kittiwakes glide overhead, completing the picture-perfect setting. From its simple beginnings as small

café, Kaffi Duus has evolved into a sizable restaurant with an extensive menu, suitable for an intimate tete-à-tete or a special occasion dinner for large groups.

The chef regaled me with one of the specialties of the house, the Seafood Trio á la Duus, comprising 3 types of fish, plus shrimp and lobster tails on a mound of fresh

Kaffi Duus will fulfill your expectations for authentic Icelandic and international cuisine in a charming location, just 5 minutes from the airport.

**Kaffi Duus**

-EMV



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# A CULTURAL METROPOLIS

*Reykjanes Duus Hús combines culture and history*

The often missed but must-be-visited town of Reykjanesbær is the first sign of civilisation upon arrival in Iceland. Don't be bluffed by the smallness of the community. The wealth of activities available to visitors and locals is extensive and locals are particularly proud of their heritage and the intimacy they share with the great North Atlantic Ocean crashing upon its rocky shores.

The best place to discover the long tradition of seamanship is at the Reykjanes Art Museum located in the Duus Hús Cultural Centre, one of Iceland's most remarkable historical documentations of life in ages past.

The Duus Hús Cultural Centre opened its doors in the spring of 2002 when the first stage was completed. In the years to come, the cultural centre grew from a single construction to a cluster of houses representing 100 years of architectural history in the region, the oldest one from 1877 and the most recent one from 1954. The choice of material changed significantly from timber in 1877 to concrete in 1954.



Throughout history, the Duus Hús cluster has been a commercial centre for the local fishing industry and today, it is a memorial museum celebrating the region's long history of seamanship and fish processing.

## A veritable armada of vessels

The first house to open on May 11<sup>th</sup> in 2002 was Bátasalurinn, where over 100 models of the Icelandic fleet have been collected. The oldest are replicas of 19<sup>th</sup> century trawlers. Grímur Karlsson, a former sea captain, built the majority of the collection. Other items of interest are wooden sculptures by Guðmundur Garðarsson, and souvenirs and pictures rooted in seamanship and fish processing.

## The World of Art

Listasalurinn (art gallery) opened in April 2003 and numerous local and international artists have exhibited their work in the gallery. The current exhibition is a collection of artwork from a large collection belonging to former sea captain Matthías Matthíasson and his wife Katrín M. Ólafsdóttir. Matthías Matthíasson collected art from around the world during his travels as a captain and was a friend and a benefactor to artists in the Faroe Islands, Denmark and in Iceland.

Gryfjan or the Pit Hole opened in Duus Hús on June 11<sup>th</sup>. 2004, the day Reykjanesbær celebrated its tenth anniversary. Two years later, Bíósalurinn or the Cinema Room opened its doors for cultural activities, meetings, conferences, art exhibitions and theatre

performances. Last but not least, it has served as a concert hall where most of the community's local artists have performed since its opening.

The last building to be incorporated into the museum is the Bryggjuhúsið or the Harbour house. It is one of the more important buildings in the Duus Hús cluster, and the goal is to make it a mirror image of the original.

To the local municipality, arts are an asset to society of man, and the fusion of history and art makes the Duus Hús Cultural centre a unique place to visit.

Nearly 400.000 visitors have come to the art museum since the opening in 2002.

## A testament to the seamen of the past

A new exhibition - the Fishing Season (Vertíð) - opened on June 2, and is a documentation of the pre-industrialised years when seamen would head out to sea on small rowboats.

Workers from all corner of the country would walk long distances to the shores of Reykjanes where work was plentiful during the winter season from 2<sup>nd</sup> February to 11<sup>th</sup> May. As early as the early 1800's, commercial vessels travelled to Iceland in Spring, stocked with foreign products and departed in the autumn laden with Icelandic seafood.

Toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, merchants set up shop along the coast of Iceland. The new commercial centre became the heart of small coastal communities erected as a result of the industry's expansion. Two of the buildings in the Duus cluster are former commercial centres.



## Further in the past: The Viking World

If there is time to spare, a visit to Víkingaheimar or Viking World is a great way to end the day. It is the place to explore Norse Mythology, records of famous sagas and authentic turf houses where early settlers lived once upon a time.

-JB

**Reykjanesbær**

Tjarnargötu 12 • 230 Reykjanesbær  
 +354 421 6700  
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 www.reykjanesbaer.is

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# THEY LOVE LIFE

*Akranes is for people who enjoy nature, culture, life and fun*

**E**arly Celtic pioneers made a good choice when they set up home Akranes. It's a haven for nature lovers, bird lovers, beach lovers and history buffs. Those settlers would be surprised today at the small fishing town that has built up around their early dwellings.

You can see Akranes gleaming in the sunshine across the bay from the harbour in Reykjavik. It's only a bus ride away, with the regular bus service taking you past picturesque farms, setting the stage for the variety of nature and bird life as you approach the town. Once there, the local bus service is free.

Akranes is a very popular place for camping and caravans. The sites are well set up with all the facilities easily available. Shops and the two swimming pools are close by. There is also the golden sand beach, which is unusual

for Iceland. There are changing facilities and a sun veranda right next to it. Hot showers and a jacuzzi make it a relaxing place to enjoy the long summer evenings.

Akranes is surrounded on three sides by the sea—which gives plenty of scope for some good fishing. Since the camp site is right next to one of these fishing spots, catching your dinner is all the easier, if you're a fisherman.

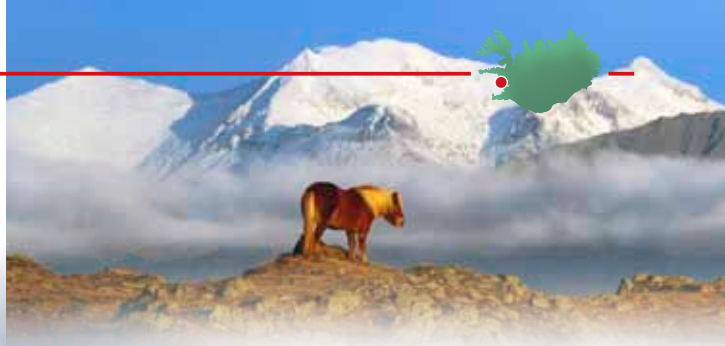
The geography of the area is really inspiring for hikers, who have all levels of hiking open to them—including the mountain that forms the backdrop to the town and, to a large extent, protection from the northerly winds.

The summer is usually warm and pleasant but the same cannot be said for the winter! If you take a look at the two lighthouses, you'll see the smaller one is a little closer to the sea.

It has been abandoned now since the winter's rough seas spray right over it. Both are open to visitors and provide a beautiful panoramic view of the Akranes area and all the way to Keflavík.

This is the land of the Celts and, for the history buff, there is much to see. The spiritually-minded Celts travelled in small boats covered in skins that seemed to survive on a wing and a prayer, relying on miracles rather than engineering prowess like the Vikings. In fact, it is said that Saint Brendan tested his faith in these little craft against the wild Atlantic—faith and prayers that clearly kept them, as they had a thriving community around Akranes.

That community spirit not only survives but thrives today, as the townsfolk love all forms of culture. The Music School is right



in the centre of town; art and crafts are found everywhere, as is writing, singing and poetry.

One of the highlights of the year is the Irish festival from 6<sup>th</sup>—8<sup>th</sup> July with a variety of events that will keep the die-hard party addict happy. It's a big family event that includes everyone in the fun—local and visitor alike.

Akranes is a family town and there are plenty of activities from golf to football (their top team boasts several stars who have gone to famous international clubs). There is a great barbeque area in the park, surrounded by trees, with games and crazy golf. Walking and cycling are popular pastimes with paths of different lengths to enjoy.

The museum area is really worth visiting. Besides examples of fishing vessels down the years displayed outside, including the only

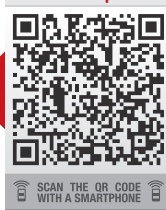


example of a 3-masted cutter, the indoor section has samples of practically every aspect of the fisherman's life. Next to it is another unusual museum: The Icelandic Sport Museum. Check out the footsteps on the floor. A Geological museum is housed in the same building with a large collection of

stones which show just how colourful Iceland is. There is always a temporary exhibit on display. Currently, there is a photo gallery of past residents that gives a fascinating insight into the character of the people. Work is starting shortly on the construction of The Celtic Cultural Centre, which will bring scientifically documented evidence together of the Celtic influence and history. But then, just look at the number of fair-skinned red-heads and you'll see how strong it is.

-ASF

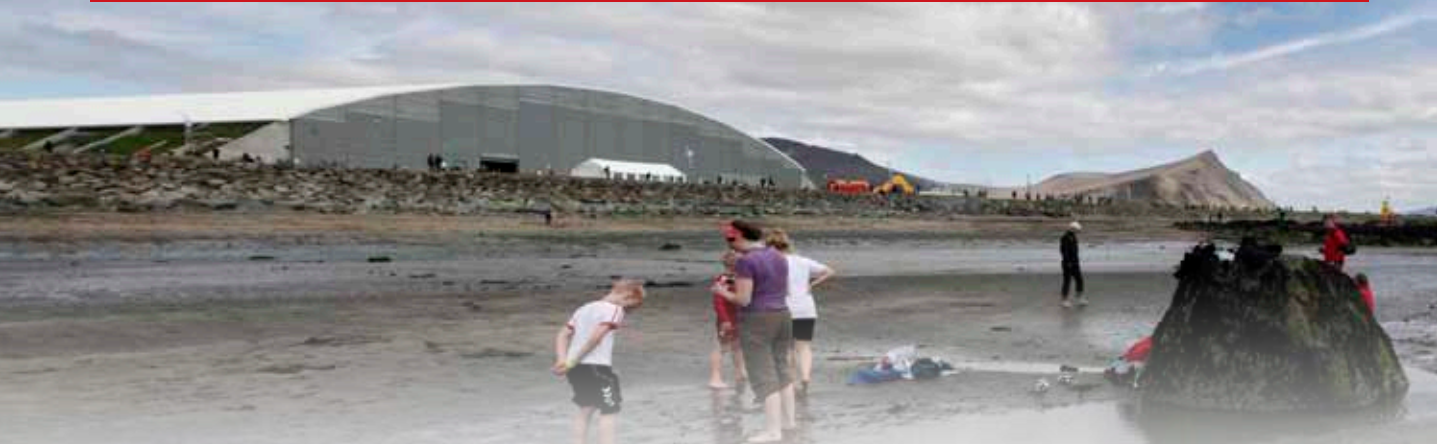
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## EAT LIKE THE LOCALS

*Gamla Kaupfélagið is a popular place for locals and foreigners to meet*

For more than three years, Gamla Kaupfélagið has been one of the most popular restaurants in Akranes, enjoyed by locals as well as tourists. With a great variety of dishes, this restaurant can satisfy every hungry customer.

### You name it!

From popular pizzas, pasta and burgers to soup, barbeque ribs and lamb fillet. You will find something appetising as you shuffle through this big menu! Open from noon till ten in the evening, this is the restaurant where locals stop by for the big salads, yummy pizzas baked in a brick oven on birch, Icelandic lobster soup or the homemade ice-cream.



### A bar after 10

The last food order is normally at 10 p.m. But on the weekends, Gamla Kaupfélagið turns into Akranes' local pub, where folks enjoy a drink with friends and chat till 3 in the morning. It is often a venue for troubadours and concerts. So, come and enjoy the local atmosphere with the friendly people of Akranes!

-AB

#### Gamla Kaupfélagið



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**Good food doesn't have to be expensive**  
 "Portions are not small here", says Gísli Sigurjón Þráinsson, restaurant manager. Taking that into consideration, you will not have to take a lot of money out of your pocket to dine here. Don't worry about not finding a table. The restaurant takes up to 230 people, nicely divided into two rooms and a terrace for sunny days.



# AKRANES

## THE CELTIC TOWN THAT GLITTERS ACROSS THE BAY



### Birta Guesthouse

This locally run summer guesthouse is located in Akranes, a small fishing town reachable within a 45 minutes drive from Reykjavík. We offer 32 rooms in the local high school dormitory during summer break.

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Akranes Folk Museum • Iceland's Sport Museum • Mineral Kingdom • Play area for kids



### Garðakaffi

Located within the Akranes Museum Center, Garða Café invites you to stop by for light refreshments, teas & coffee.

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✉ gudnihh@simnet.is

☎ +354 431 5566  
🌐 www.museum.is

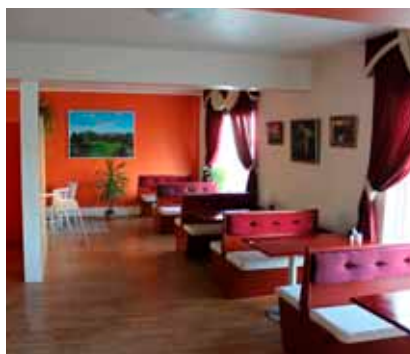


## OPENING IN AKRANES

*Kaffi Ást is the hot spot to visit*

**H**ögni and Elena have put a terrific amount of effort into converting the new Kaffi Ást, and it looks beautiful. This is going to be the gathering place for all kinds of coffee, with homemade pastries, cakes or cookies. Simple meals of hamburgers and hot dogs will be available and the bar has alcohol, too.

What makes this kaffi stand out is the beautiful décor. The gallery consists of works of art and handicrafts, all locally-made. If you like it, you can buy it and take it home with you. There's a lot to like here.



For instance, many of the tables have a glass top covering a beautiful display of stones and little pieces of art. It makes for a very interesting conversation piece—and could make an interesting quiz to see who can identify the different items.




While you're enjoying your refreshments, you can always check in, as there is wireless Internet available. On those nice, warm sunny days that you get so many of in Akranes, there will be tables outside to enjoy the fresh air, with a fountain playing in the garden.

*It's a beautiful place—pay it a visit!*

-ASF

**Kaffi Ást**



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☎ +354 844 9400  
✉ kaffiast@gmail.com  
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# DEEP IN NATURAL WONDERS

*Gamli Bærinn Bed & Breakfast at Húsafell*



**D**riving north towards Akureyri in the Spring, I decided to wander off the ring road near the town of Borgarnes to do some exploring. Forty minutes later, I found myself at Húsafell—an area rich in history with several extraordinary waterfalls, two scenic glaciers and some pretty amazing people.

Húsafell is a service village nowadays, but in former times it was a sprawling estate with a farm and rectory under the care of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Pastor Snorri Björnason. The old farmhouse from 1908, known today as Gamli Bærinn, has been renovated and turned into a quaint bed and breakfast that offers sleeping bag accommodation and made



up beds. Owners Steinunn and Sæmundur will be more than happy to point you in the right direction to the natural wonders in the area, among them:

- Surtshellir - a lava tube, the longest cave in Iceland at (1970 m or 6463 ft)
- Hraunfossar - a series of low cascading falls that come up through the lava plain.
- Barnafoss falls
- Langjökull and Eiríksjökull Glaciers

Beautifully sculpted rocks, the work of sculptor and musician Páll Guðmundsson, himself the great, great, great grandson of Pastor Snorri, are scattered around the grounds. A fascinating artist and musician, Páll is also known for his marimba-like instrument made of stones. Páll and the Sigur Rós band did a performance using the steinnharp, as it is called in Icelandic, several years ago in the Surtshellir lava tube cave.

Gamli bærinn Húsafelli

-EMV



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 none

## Gallery Lundi

*Lovely hand crafted, artisanal items of glass, wood, hand-knit woolen sweaters, scarves, mittens, leather bags, jewellery and more. The gallery is owned and staffed by a group of local artists who have been in business since 1997.*

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## HOME IN THE WEST

*The place to stay in the heart of the Snæfellsnes peninsula*

On a clear day, the entire Snæfellsnes peninsula can be seen from Reykjavík. Only 100 km away from the capital, the peninsula has some of Iceland's most impressive sights caught in time, lava fields, volcanos, rough cliffs and the mystical Snæfellsjökull. To explore all of these and more of what the peninsula has to offer, Kast Guesthouse in the heart of Snæfellsnes, offers a lovely place to stay.



### Welcome to the family

Lydia Fannberg Gunnarsdóttir, the guesthouse manager, started to build it as a summer house for her family on her father's land at Lýsudalur farm in Staðarsveit. The project kept on growing bigger and bigger, so she decided to open the doors to the public. So in 2011, Kast guesthouse was opened and since then, Lydia and her family have shared the beauty of their land. Lydia's father can lead you on horseback riding tours which you can book right in the guesthouse lobby.

### In the heart of nature

Located at the foot of a mountain, the name of the hotel comes from the green meadow

behind, where the mares often go to cast their foals. There is nothing here separating you from the nature. If you enjoy fishing, pick one of the small lakes just across the road from the house. Only 2 minutes away, you can have a relaxing bath in the swimming pool at the Lýsuhóll community centre. It is renowned for the nutrient rich mineral water and its effect on the skin.

### Camp at the foot of the mountain

They also run a campsite in the peaceful shelter of the mountain. It is fully equipped and you can always enjoy a fresh meal in the guesthouse. Breakfast buffet is included for the travellers staying at the guesthouse and

for those with a sweet tooth, there are always home baked goodies like snuður, ostaslaufa or bananakökur, as Lydia's brother is a baker.

### Close to everything you want to see

"There is so much to do in this area", says Lydia. In just 20 minutes, you are at the bottom of the Snæfells mountain and only 20 km away lie the fishing villages of Arnarstapi and Hellnar with breathtaking cliffs, home to several bird species like seagulls, fulmars, kittiwakes or the aggressive arctic terns. Drive 60 km towards the North and you'll find the picturesque Stykkisholmur. From there you can take several sea tours tailored to diverse tastes: bird watching, sea angling or gourmet tours with fresh scallops just caught from the sea.

*Kast guesthouse offers 16 double rooms and a restaurant that welcomes up to 50 people. Groups bigger than 10 people get a 15% discount. You can book online or just show up. Ekkert máll!*

-AB

### Kast Guesthouse



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Lýsudal • 356 Snæfellsbæ  
**+354 421 5252**  
 kast@kastguesthouse.is  
 www.kastguesthouse.is



# A TOUCH OF THE INTERNATIONAL

*Restaurant Gilið, an innovative family owned restaurant*

**A**long the coast of the magical Snæfellsnes Peninsula, many charming fishing villages catch the attention of travellers. Among the more arresting is Ólafsvík and there, nestled beside a trickling brook and overlooking the sea, Restaurant Gilið offers traditional Icelandic food with a creative, sophisticated international touch. Fresh fish and Icelandic lamb are the chef's specialities but here they excel at making every morsel from scratch. This gourmet restaurant in a small village by the sea is open for lunch and dinner, while in the afternoon, a thirsty guest can enjoy a cup of coffee accompanied by some of the tasty pastries they serve there.



Dinner, however, begins at 6 pm and ends at 10 pm. Two course meals are served all day and the daily menu offers a choice between the catch of the day or meat. Accessing ones e-mail over a steaming cup of coffee, while savouring the refreshments is easy since the restaurant offers a free WIFI connection.

## Cosy Wooden Cabin

The restaurant is situated in a big wood cabin with a huge terrace. It is warm and friendly on the inside and the breathtaking view from the terrace makes it a popular seating area on warm summer days. With its tables for four, it makes for an enjoyable, intimate setting for a delicious meal.

Every weekend, the restaurant is filled with live music by local groups who really make the place hop.



## Ambitious cuisine

The restaurant family owned. Chef Axel Axelsson and his wife both cook and she serves as headwaiter as well. They opened the restaurant two years ago and have since served food and entertainment in equal measure. They get fresh fish daily directly from the harbour. The chef has lived in California and his cuisine is inspired by the influences he soaked up while staying in that sunny place. Ambitiously, all food here is hand-made even the dough for the bread.

The kitchen opens at 11 am. A lunch buffet with a varied and great choice of dishes and soups is available till 4 pm.

Gilið Restaurant -SS



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**+354 436 1300**  
 gilið@gilið.is  
 www.gilið.is



## ICELAND'S FIRST SETTLER

*Find the furtive little arctic fox in Súðavík in the West Fjords*

The arctic fox is an enchanting creature. At some point in the distant past, it travelled across the frozen sea and, in spite of the inhospitable climate, found a home on this small, isolated island. The arctic fox is Iceland's only native terrestrial land mammal and has been the subject of curiosity by scholars and lay people alike. For this reason, The Arctic Fox Centre was established in the village of Súðavík in 2010, which is well fitting since the fox is the area's distinctive animal.



### Exhibition of the first native

The Centre is located in the oldest house in Súðavík, a 120 year old farm that was renovated by the local authorities and is situated between what locals call the 'old village', destroyed in a devastating avalanche in 1995, and the 'new village', built in its stead at a safe distance from the mountain.

The Centre serves as an educational and cultural hub and offers an extensive exhibition on the arctic fox as well as regularly exhibiting local art and craft. Its main aim however, is to collect and preserve anything of importance regarding the arctic fox and its long-lasting relationship with man as, surprisingly, fox hunting is the oldest paid operation in Iceland.

The exhibition is divided into three sections; the biology of the fox, the hunting of the fox

and the hunters themselves, the last mentioned containing, for example, objects and personal accounts from fox hunters. Other material is presented through written text or video and of course there are quite a few stuffed animals. Visitors are guided through the exhibition, which is one of a kind in Iceland and open all year round. The Centre is a non-profit business, involved in research and studies on the population of the fox. They also offer guidance on arctic fox tours in collaboration with tourist offices as well as believing in and supporting ecotourism in Iceland.

A nice little café is run at the Centre, selling homebaked pastries, light courses and wonderful coffee which guests can enjoy out on the patio, overlooking the beautiful mountains and the sea. The Café has an open Internet access. On Friday nights, live music is performed in the loft, where it's nice to sit down for a drink in the cosy atmosphere. The Centre also has a small boutique selling specially made souvenirs and craftwork.

-HP



The Arctic Fox Center



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# ADVENTURE AT SEA

Go fishing in the West Fjords waters with Icelandic Sea Angling

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For centuries, the brave seamen faced the wrath of the sea to provide for their families on shore. In winters, often fearing for their lives, they faced violent waves that dwarfed their little boats as they rowed out from the fjords or on calm summer days, heaved a sigh of relief as they set out.



To the owners of Iceland Sea Angling, fishing continues to be a way of life in the twenty-first century.

It was in 2006 when the adventure began with 5 boats in Tálknafjörður and 7 in Súðavík. After only six years in the sea angling business, the company fleet has expanded dramatically with the addition of 9 boats in Bolungarvík.

With accommodation available in all three communities, sea angling in the Great fjords of Vestfjörður is an exciting Icelandic experience no spirited traveller should miss.



A day spent at sea, with the occasional slap of salted sea water and the loud calls of seabirds, is a proper Icelandic adventure.

Guided tours are available in German, English and Icelandic.

Iceland Sea Angling



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-JB



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# TROLLING THE WESTFJORDS

*Living Legends in Drangsnæs*

According to an old Icelandic folk tale, the Westfjords were nearly separated from Iceland by a relentless trio of trolls, furiously digging away at the narrow strip of soil fanning off to form the Westfjords.

One troll woman competing against her conspirators realised that her monumental task would not be accomplished and slammed the spade of her shovel down in a rage, breaking off a chunk of land with her ox on it, thus forming Grimsey, the small island near Drangsnæs and home to the world's most concentrated puffin colony.

Though the trolls were unsuccessful in breaking off the Westfjords, the choppy

coastline of a tiny fishing village called Drangsnæs at the far end of Steingrímsfjörður bears marks of the troll woman's handiwork. Her grim profile, transformed into stone by the first rays of sunlight, watches over Grimsey.

Happy accidents have helped Drangsnæs both in legend and reality. A source of geothermal water was discovered when someone forgot to shut off the water supply feeding into the fish factory. When the town furiously sought water by boring holes, they struck geothermal gold: a hot water source that now heats the entire village and provides free hot tubs on the beach from where visitors watch birdlife,

seals and, occasionally, whales. Large stones sheltering them from strong coastal winds have teardrops carved in them, created by artist Mireyja Samper.

An annual festival, held in the middle of July, celebrates Drangsnæs' livelihood by tickling the palette with tastes of minke whale, puffin, seal, and a wide variety of fish from the fjord. Kids and adults can try their hand at sea-angling, while braver visitors attempt to swim through strong currents to Grimsey. The festival has steadily expanded over sixteen years of celebration and has grown to host thousands of people. The festival is run entirely by volunteers who pour into Drangsnæs to help the 65 townspeople prepare to receive guests.

Drangsnæs has a long relationship with volunteers who have travelled to help not only with the festival, but with various projects such as building the community centre. "Cooperation is an important part of life here," says Jenny Jensdóttir, "without it we couldn't survive."

Too bad the legendary trolls were too busy to realize this. Perhaps if they had adopted the spirit of Drangsnæs' residents, they would be floating on an island called Westfjords rather than sitting in stony silence.

-KB



**Kaldraneshreppur**



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Holtagata • 520 Drangsnæs  
**+354 451 3277**  
 drangsnæs@drangsnæs.is  
 www.drangsnæs.is



Most of the guests staying at Hótel Djúpavík are in search of a nature experience. Many walk from one fjord to another but others use cars, kayaks or boats to get from place to place. Eva and Asbjörn provide guidance and advice on what to see and how to get there along with comfort and rest after a long day's exploration.



## A NATURE PARADISE

*Hótel Djúpavík, comfort and care at the edge of the world*

Untouched nature and interesting history are among the attractions of Djúpavík at Strandir. In this remote part of Iceland, a special breed of people found a way to live off the land and, when all the fjords were filled with herring, this quiet cove became important in the hunt for the 'silver of the sea'. Now it is a paradise for walkers and nature lovers who fill up Hótel Djúpavík from early spring till autumn.

### Old factory and dormitory

Hótel Djúpavík was established in 1985 when Eva Sigurbjörnsdóttir and her husband Ásbjörn Þorgilsson, decided to cultivate guests rather than fish. "We had planned to start a fish farm but were unable to get a loan from the bank," says Eva. "We had bought the women's dormitory along with the old herring factory and the hotel started there."

### A Historical Exhibition

The Herring Factory is now the site of Djúpavík's Historical Exhibition where old photographs and texts lead viewers through the life and times of people in this quiet cove at the edge of the world.

Hótel Djúpavík

-JB



Djúpavík • 524 Árneshreppur  
+354 451 4037  
djupavik@snerpa.is  
www.djupavik.com



## ICELAND'S OLDEST COUNTRY HOTEL

*Hotel Bjarkalundur is at the entrance to the West Fjords*

Under the majestic Vaðalfjöll mountain, with its two distinctive tops of volcanic basalt plugs, nestles Bjarkalundur, the oldest country hotel in Iceland. Surrounded by an ancient birch wood, the hotel's immediate environment is friendly and welcoming. This historic and popular resting spot has served Icelanders and foreign guests for sixty-five years.

### A World Apart

Bjarkalundur is conveniently located to stop for a breather before entering Iceland's most remote region, the West Fjords. The hotel has, throughout its history, welcomed guests and made them comfortable. In the past, dances were held during the summer months and still the Midsummer Night bonfire is an event frequented by locals and travellers alike.



The Western Fjords are a world apart, as reflected in the folk tale of the trolls who tried to dig this mountainous peninsula away from the mainland to establish a troll colony, free of men and their meddling. The landscape is a mixture of deep narrow fjords, high mountains and luscious green plants. Tall cliffs, teeming with birdlife rise sharply from the deep blue sea.

Enjoy a respite at Bjarkalundur before and after experiencing the amazing charm of the West Fjords and their people. You will find it just off Road 60.

Hótel Bjarkalundur

-SS



Bjarkalundi • 380 Reykhólahreppi  
+354 434 7762  
bjarkalundur@bjarkalundur.is  
www.bjarkalundur.is

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# THE WONDERFUL WILD NORTHWEST

*The wildlife wilderness of Húnaþing vestra beckons those with a love of the outdoors*

**H**únaþing vestra, on the northwest coast of Iceland, is a region renowned for its amazing wildlife and natural beauty. Consequently, each year, thousands of tourists visit the area to enjoy the outdoors and experience the best of the Icelandic wilderness. Húnaþing vestra also offers both accommodation and recreation.

### **Beauty on the grand scale**

The mesmerizing landscape alone is reason enough for spending a good part of your trip in the region, as some of Iceland's most stunning natural wonders can be found there. The imposing Hvítserkur is without a doubt the area's most distinct symbol. A 15 m high monolith and home to numerous bird species, it rises from the sea of Húnaþing vestra fjörður fjörður resembling a giant, prehistoric monster wading out to the shores that brim with life as one of the largest seal habitats in the country.

Húnaþing vestra is the home of three of the most abundant salmon rivers in the country and has a varied birdlife, attracting ever more birdwatchers each year.

The region's beauty, displayed in its grassy heaths, majestic mountains, pillar rocks and sparkling lakes and rivers, truly sums up the uniqueness of Icelandic nature. Its vast heathlands contain the largest untouched wetlands in Iceland, very popular for angling and birdwatching. From there you can drive into the highlands, though the roads are only traversable by large jeeps.

Kolugljúfur, a magnificent canyon through which the Víðidalsá river runs and named after the giantess Kola, is another unforgettable site. The river pours over two spectacular waterfalls named Kolufossar.

Borgvirki fort is a 10–15 m high columnar basalt formation, believed to be an old scene of battle and a fort for the district. There's

an observation platform at its top and a breathtaking view over the Húnaflói Bay.

### **Leisure and activity**

Walking, hiking and riding paths have been laid systematically over the last years, making the area easily accessible. Additionally, information signs have been put up and panoramic viewpoints created to enrich visitors' experience of the area even further.

### **Seals biggest attraction**

Every year, travellers flock to the beautiful Vatnsnes peninsula, cameras in hand, to observe these adorable creatures and their offspring, rolling around on the shores and playing in the sea.

Húnaþing Vestra is without a doubt one of the best spots in Iceland for viewing seals, the main locations being Svalbarð, Illugastaðir and Ósar. There aren't many places where





# HÚNAÞING VESTRA

these beautiful animals can be viewed in such closeness in their natural environment, so this is an experience bound to captivate both young and old alike. You can also go seal-watching and sea-angling on a boat from Hvammstangi and a midnight fishing trip in summer is something you won't forget!

## A Rich History and Culture

The region's cultural history is no less interesting than it's natural surroundings. This is the birthplace of one of Iceland's most notorious heroes from the old sagas, Grettir the Strong. The beloved poet Skálda-Rósa, of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, lived and wrote her most famous poems here. There are also various farmers markets, museums and exhibitions of interest, cultural as well as educational. In spite of it's small population of around 1,200, Húnaþing vestra has a remarkably high service standard and is bursting with life and activity.



## Service and accommodation

You'll find accommodation in all price ranges in Húnaþing vestra. There are several excellent camping sites to choose from, situated in Hvammstangi, Sæberg and Laugarbakki. The holiday farm, Dæli in Víðidalur, also has a camp site in addition to it's lovely guesthouse, hot pot, sauna and mini golf course. Other accommodation possibilities include both guesthouses in Hvammstangi and the highly rated Hótel Edda in Laugarbakki.

Gauksmýri in Línakradalur is another place of note. It's a beautiful farm that has, in recent years, carried out the ambitious project of reclaiming the area's wetland and putting up facilities for birdwatching, as well as running a horse rental and a restaurant. Brekkulækur in Miðfjörður has also been offering riding tours and accommodation for years and is an ever popular stop for travellers. Ósar on the Vatnsnes peninsula, situated

right by Hvítserkur, is a popular hostel and a great spot for viewing seals.

The Icelandic Seal Centre in Hvammstangi is a highly informative research centre and a museum that has an ongoing exhibition and is well worth a visit. Other museums of note are Reykir Regional Museum in Hrótafjörður and the Commercial Museum in Hvammstangi, which both offer interesting exhibitions about the area. Also be sure not to miss the inspiring Bardúsa craft gallery in Hvammstangi. Unwinding in the town's swimming pool after an eventful day is a must.

## Húnaþing vestra



Hvammstangabraut 5 • 530 Hvammstanga  
**+354 455 2400**  
alla@hunathing.is  
www.hunathing.is

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# LAND OF SEALS

*The Ultimate Seal-Watching*



**Gistiheimli Hönnu Siggu**  
 A cosy and homey quiet accommodation. Bright, spacious rooms with good quality beds. Beautiful views over the town and the fjord. Attractive garden with hot tub and panoramic view. Organic breakfast with home baked bread. Fully equipped kitchen. Meals up on request.

🏠 Garðavegur 26 • 530 Hvammstangi 📞 +354 451 2407  
 ✉️ gistih@simnet.is 🌐 www.simnet.is/gistih



**Spes Farmers Market**  
 A fascinating market with local foods eg. fresh, smoked and dried fish, cheese and jams, handicrafts and special crafts created using ancient Viking methods and materials gleaned from the area.

🏠 Grettisból • 531 Hvammstangi 📞 +354 894 6776  
 ✉️ spes.sveitamarkadur@gmail.com 🌐 www.northwest.is/spes.asp



**Illugastaðir Farm Café**  
 One of the best seal watching spots in Iceland. Walking paths in proximity to the sea with beautiful views and opportunities to observe seals in their natural habitat. Hot drinks and light meals available at the café.

🏠 Vatnsnes • 531 Hvammstangi 📞 +354 451 2775



## Sealwatching

A treat for children and adults alike to take an unforgettable seal watching tour where you get the chance to observe the seals in their natural habitat close up at one of the best seal watching locations in Iceland. The seals are playful and curious by nature and often swim quite close to the boat to get a better look at you. Then it is a question who is watching whom? Amazing photo opportunities.

**Departures at 10:00, 13:00 and 16:00—Duration 1 hour 45 mins.**

🏠 Hvammstangi Harbour 📞 +354 897 9900 ✉️ selasigling@simnet.is 🌐 www.sealwatching.is




**Dæli Holiday Farm**  
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🏠 Dæli • 531 Hvammstangi 📞 +354 451 2566 ✉️ daeli@daeli.is 🌐 www.daeli.is

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- Camp site with a fully-equipped service house
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- Mini-golf • HotPot • Sauna



## Geitafell

Whatever you do at Vatnsnes don't miss dining at Geitafell seafood restaurant. There you can taste our delicious vegetable and seafood soups, served with locally grown salads and homemade bread.

🏠 Vatnsnesi • 530 Hvammstangi 📞 +354 861 2503  
 ✉️ info@geitafell.is 🌐 www.geitafell.is



# THE SEALS

Destination • [www.visithunathing.is](http://www.visithunathing.is)



**The Wool Factory Shop**  
**KIDKA**

The Wool Factory Shop enables you to buy directly from the people who make traditional natural Icelandic wool products and ornaments in original colours.

🏠 Höfðabraut 34 • 530 Hvammstangi 📞 +354 451 0060 ✉ kidka@simnet.is 🌐 www.kidka.com



**Kirkjuhvammur**  
Camp Site in Hvammstangi

Only 6 km from Road No. 1. The site is located in a sheltered dell just outside the town, with service centre and good facilities for campers and trailers.

Season: May 15th - September 15th

🏠 Kirkjuhvammur • 530 Hvammstangi 📞 +354 615 3779  
✉ hvammur.camping@gmail.com +354 899 0008



194 km from Reykjavik on Road No. 1

**Gauksmýri Lodge**

Holiday services emphasising nature and horsemanship. With accommodation, refreshments, horse-rental, horse shows and bird watching.

🏠 Gauksmýri • 531 Hvammstanga 📞 +354 451 2927  
✉ gauksmyri@gauksmyri.is 🌐 www.gauksmyri.is



**The Folk Museum of Reykir**

On display are a number of famous old boats and ships, amongst them the famous shark ship Ófeigur from Ófeigsfjörður. We also show how Icelanders used to live by displaying the living arrangements of an old house named Syðsti-Hvammur, which used to be near Hvammstangi.

Many spectacular 19th - 20th Century pieces are found inside the museum. New & exciting crafts from the local community will be on sale at the museum. On-site restaurant.

🏠 Reykjagata 6 • 500 Staður 📞 +354 451 0040  
✉ reykjsafn@simnet.is 🌐 www.byggdasafnhos.is



**Hlaðan**  
Café & Restaurant & Bar

Hlaðan is a cosy café, restaurant and bar specialising in Icelandic home cooking. It's novel location is in an old restored house that used to be stables and a cow shed, in the centre of Hvammstangi overlooking the harbour and the seashore.

🏠 Brekkugata 2 • 530 Hvammstangi  
📞 +354 451 1110 ✉ hladan@simnet.is



# GATEWAY TO THE VATNSNES PENINSULA

*The Icelandic Seal Centre at Hvammstangi*

The Icelandic Seal Centre of Hvammstangi, the gateway to the picturesque Vatnsnes Peninsula, provides the perfect starting point for the exploration of this outstandingly beautiful but little-visited corner of North West Iceland. Heralded as the ultimate seal-viewing destination in Iceland, the Vatnsnes Peninsula offers visitors a unique opportunity to observe both harbour seals and grey seals in their natural habitats. And

what a better way to learn about these gentle creatures than a stop at the Icelandic Seal Centre in Hvammstangi? Now operating in its new 280m<sup>2</sup> premises, the centre multi-tasks as a museum, research centre and tourist information desk, all under one roof. Through its varied educational exhibits and cultural displays that include seal folklore, the centre offers a comprehensive view of seals in Iceland, their role and



importance in Icelandic history and present day sustainability issues surrounding this sometimes controversial marine mammal. At the tourist information desk, visitors can book seal watching tours, either on land or by sea, as well as accommodation in the area. Established in 2005, the centre is dedicated to ongoing seal research, educational outreach and the promotion of sustainable tourism, particularly as it pertains to seal populations in and around the Vatnsnes Peninsula.



**Selasetur Íslands**

-EMV



Strandgötu 1 • 530 Hvammstanga  
**+354 451 2345**  
 info@selasetur.is  
 www.selasetur.is

# EAT ICELANDIC

*Home cooking right on the Ring Road*

Víðigerði guesthouse is one of the most conveniently located and affordable accommodations in Iceland set just on the left side of the main ring road, past Hvammstangi. On the upper floor it has 8 double rooms that share private facilities and on the lower floor, a diner and a small store selling snacks and various goods. This summer there will be a fenced off playground in the back garden as well as tables for dining or having a drink outside.

The owner, Karen, who runs the guesthouse with her husband and daughter, says that in her experience, tourists really love Icelandic food and therefore she wants to give guests a taste of the way Icelanders eat at home. For breakfast, she serves popular Icelandic milk products like skyr as well as toast and cereal. She uses ingredients from local farmers and the nearby regions for her cooking that consists of classic national dishes, like fish with butter and potatoes and the ever popular



meat-soup which will be served every day this summer. Made from lamb and fresh vegetables it's as wholesome as it is tasty and just about everybody's favourite dish. Prices are more than reasonable since Karen is determined to make Víðigerði a place where families can come and eat a good meal without much expense. She also has offers for groups.

**Víðigerði**

-HP



Víðigerði • 531 Hvammstanga  
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to promote textile art and design. It has an ongoing project which involves creating an embroidered tapestry depicting a stormy family saga from the area, written in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

**The Textile Museum**

The Textile Museum was originally founded by the Women’s Union and is housed in the old handcraft college. In 2003, it moved to a beautiful new house, specially designed for it’s ambitious operation. It’s a unique museum that celebrates the artistry of women’s handcraft and has an impressive collection of homemade wool and textile items as well as beautiful Icelandic national costumes, artistic embroideries and many of the tools and equipment used to produce them. It also exhibits the work of contemporary textile designers.

**The Sea Ice Exhibition Centre**

Through the ages, the people of the north coast of Iceland have had to deal with the difficulties stemming from sea ice, the very thing which gave the country its name. The Sea Ice Exhibition Centre offers visitors an understanding of this natural phenomena and it’s impact on people’s lives in the northern regions.



**Amenities in Blönduós**

Blönduós has a good camping area, guesthouses and a hotel as well as several restaurants and cafés and there are plenty of recreation opportunities. You’ll also find horse rental, a small golf course and an excellent swimming pool with hot tubs, a waterslide and a kids’ pool.

**A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT**

*Blönduós, the Town by the Bay*

**B**lönduós, on the northwest coast, is in a beautiful situation on the banks of Húnaflói bay. The town is named after the river Blandá, one of the largest fishing rivers in the country, which runs through the town all the way from Hofsjökull glacier and into Húnaflói Bay.

One of the area’s most treasured locations is Hrútey, a small protected island which lies in Blandá. Hrútey is accessible by a footbridge and is a wonderful place to spend the day hiking and picnicking. There’s a rich birdlife on the island and therefore it’s closed between April 20<sup>th</sup> and June 20<sup>th</sup> for the protection of the nesting and eggs.

a kind in the country and give a fascinating insight into the nation’s history and way of life.

**The Icelandic Salmon Centre**

The town’s proximity to one of the best salmon rivers in Iceland and the popularity of fishing as a sport has led to the foundation of The Icelandic Salmon Centre which opens in the beginning of June, 2012. The centre will provide an extensive background of the biology and habitats of the salmon as well as their part in Icelandic food culture and the history of salmon fishing. The exhibition is sure to be both educational and entertaining and has a special area for children.

**The Icelandic Textile Centre**

The Icelandic Textile Centre is located in the old Women’s Handcraft College and works

**Unique museums**

Blönduós especially prides itself on four splendid museums, some of which are one of



**Blönduósbaer** -HP



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[www.jomfruin.is](http://www.jomfruin.is)



# Hótel Blönduós

*Explore the beauty of the Icelandic countryside. Try your luck fishing in many of the area's fishing spots or just relax at our hotel or guesthouse. We offer quality rooms for low prices. Hótel Blönduós should be a destination in itself if you are touring the North of Iceland.*



🏠 Aðalgata 6 - 540 Blönduós 📞 +354 452 4205 ✉ hotelblonduos@simnet.is 🌐 www.hotelblonduos.is



swimming pool, a 9-hole golf course, cafés and restaurants and a grocery store. Museums include the Atlantic Salmon Museum, Sea Ice Exhibition Centre and the Icelandic Textile Centre and Textile Museum.

Glaðheimar is an ideal place from which to explore. "Blönduós has enough things to do for visitors for a day. For those who choose to stay with us for a few days, there are at least four distinctive day drives," says Lárus. Just ask him or one of his staff when you're here!

-HP

## SLEEP BY THE RIVERSIDE

*Glaðheimar Cottages and Campsite in Blönduós*

**G**laðheimar Cottages and Campsite are on the northern shores of the River Blandá in the town of Blönduós in the north of Iceland. This moderately priced accommodation stands quite close to Route No.1 which circumnavigates the entire country. Glaðheimar is therefore a very convenient place to stay for those travelling around Iceland, as well as those who might wish to spend a week in the area.

"We're open all year round," says Lárus B. Jónsson, who is the man in charge. "We have 20 fully equipped cottages suitable for 3-8 persons each. Hot tubs come standard with most of the cottages, and four cottages have a sauna in addition. We also run a campsite and a caravan park."

Blönduós has only 900 inhabitants. However, it is blessed with a wide range of services and leisure opportunities. There's a



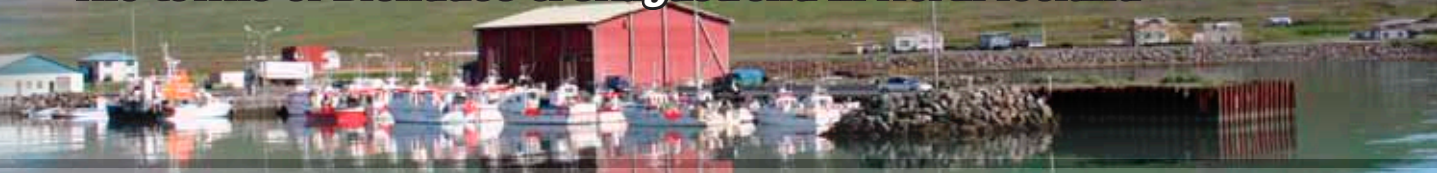
**Glaðheimar**  
 🏠 Melabraut 21 • 540 Blönduós  
 📞 +354 820 1300  
 ✉ gladheimar@simnet.is  
 🌐 www.gladheimar.is





# OUTLAWS HORSES & HISTORY

*The towns of Blönduós & Skagaströnd in North Iceland*



## The Museum of Prophecies

An exhibition on Þórdís the Fortune teller, of Skagaströnd in the late 10th century. A painted tapestry tells her story. A guided tour features interesting information about prophecies and fortune telling. Visitors can have their fortunes told and their palms read on request. Children can examine Þórdís's gold chest for hidden things.

📍 Oddagata 6 • 545 Skagaströnd 📞 +354 861 5089  
✉️ dagny@marska.is 🌐 www.spakona.is



## Kantrybær

The Country Museum and Restaurant are dedicated to the King of country music in Iceland, Hallbjörn J. Hjartarson and country music in general. The restaurant offers steaks, trout, hamburgers and pizzas in a warm and inviting log house.

📍 Hólansvegji 11 • 545 Skagaströnd 📞 +354 452 2829  
✉️ kantry@kantry.is 🌐 www.kantry.is



## The Salmon Museum of Iceland

An information and a research centre about salmon fishing and the Icelandic Salmon. Opening in June 2012.

📍 Efstubraut 1 • 540 Blönduós 📞 +354 452 2900  
✉️ laxasetur@laxasetur.is 🌐 www.laxasetur.is



## A LEGEND COMES TO LIFE

*Iceland's most famous outlaw now has a home*

**F**jalla-Eyvindur (Eyvindur of the Mountains) was an Icelandic outlaw in the eighteenth century whose story is a well-known legend among Icelanders. For almost forty years, he managed to survive in the harsh surroundings and difficult conditions of Iceland's wilderness and his amazing cunning in tackling the forces of nature and his abilities to both find and preserve food, earned him respect and popularity among his contemporaries.

### Into the wild

Eyvindarstofa, situated at Blönduós on the north west coast of Iceland, is an exciting stop dedicated to the life of this rather remarkable character. The story of Fjalla-Eyvindur is presented through photographs and written material and this summer, there will be a short theatrical performance depicting his life. For groups, a special menu has been put together using the cream of Iceland's crop, such as fresh salmon, slowly

cooked lamb on the bone and a divine blend of rye-bread and rhubarb. Fjalla-Eyvindur was known for his craftsmanship and the crockery at Eyvindarstofa is designed in the manner of his handiwork. The feel of his stay in the wilderness also comes across in the beautiful interiors that simulate wild nature.

Eyvindarstofa is located at Potturrinn Restaurant, right by Route No. 1, and welcomes guests all year round. In its vicinity, you'll find the lovely Hótel Húnaveilir and the enchanting Café Við Árbakkann that will further enrich your visit to Blönduós.

-HB

### Potturrinn Restaurant



📍 Norðurlandsvegji 4 • 540 Blönduós  
📞 +354 453 5060  
✉️ pot@pot.is  
🌐 www.pot.is

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# SOOTHSAYER'S MOUNTAIN

## *Magician meets Missionary*

**S**pákonufellshöfði, generally called Höfðinn (The Cape), rises west of Skagaströnd village and offers a variety of easy hiking routes. Höfðinn is a popular destination for people wanting to enjoy the beautiful outdoors where the ocean, various bird species and the majestic circle of mountains embrace the senses.

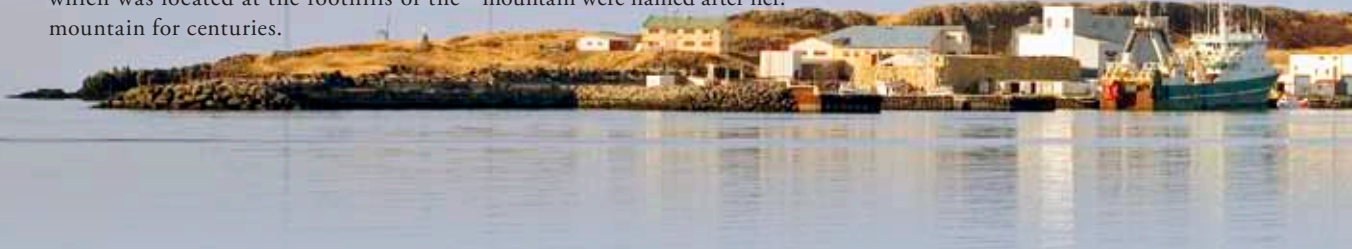


### **A History of Magic and Mission**

Spákonufellshöfði is an ancient name. Spákonufell, meaning Soothsayer's Mountain is a 646 m high mountain rising just above the town. Both names are connected with the Spákonufell farm, which was located at the foothills of the mountain for centuries.

The name's origins can be traced back to the 10<sup>th</sup> century when Þórdís the soothsayer (Þórdís spákona), said to be skilled in both magic and magical arts, lived on Fell farm. Vatnsdælasaga (Saga of Vatnsdælir) describes her as a great and intelligent woman. Later, both the farm and the Spákonufell mountain were named after her.

Þórdís was, among other things, known for fostering Iceland's first missionary, Þorvaldur Koðrásson, later named Þorvaldur víðförli (Þorvaldur the travelled). He was described as a healthy and brave man who earned the respect of heathens, which enabled him to work on evangelisation in Iceland from 981 – 986. A monument of Þorvaldur víðförli is situated close to his birth place, Stóra-Giljá, at the junction of Road No.1 and Svinvetningabraut (Road 731). *-HP*





# A SUMMER GARDEN FOR THE BIRDS

The Fulmar is a large gull-like seabird, seen at Skagaströnd from January to October, usually in flight offshore or foraging on fish offal, sometimes in large numbers. It is distributed all around Iceland, and has spread inland, sometimes tens of kilometres from the sea.

The Common Eider is seen around the coast all year round and 20-30 pairs breed in Spákonufellshöfði. A rather large colony is found at Finnstaðanes, a short distance north of Skagaströnd.

The Oystercatcher is a large, noisy wader. Two to four pairs breed on gravel and sandy land. A migratory bird, it is seen from late March to the beginning of September.

The Snipe is a migrant on Skagaströnd, arriving in early April and leaving in October. A few pairs breed on Spákonufellshöfði. The Snipe circles over its territory with a constant “drumming” sound, which is very conspicuous.

The Great Black-backed Gull is seen all year around Skagaströnd, though it is most common during winter. The very similar Lesser Black-backed Gull is a migrant and is common during summer. A few pairs of both species breed in the northern part of Spákonufellshöfði.

The Arctic Tern is a long distance migrant. It migrates to the South Atlantic in winter to the seas around Antarctica before flying north again, leaving Iceland in September

and returning at the end of April/beginning of May. It seeks food on the shore and shallow areas of the sea. A few dozen pairs breed on Spákonufellshöfði, around Vækilvík.

The Black Guillemot is a former breeder on Spákonufellshöfði. It can be seen all year round, often in winter in the Skagaströnd harbour.

The Raven is the only member of the crow family breeding in Iceland. One pair breeds in Spákonufellshöfði, but it is seen in the area the whole year. -JÓH



Sveitarfélagið Skagaströnd



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# HORSES, HISTORY

## *Skagafjörður – Diverse Nature, Great A*

**W**hen the Icelandic traveller thinks of Skagafjörður, what undoubtedly comes to mind is the steep, picturesque cliff of Drangey, which towers majestically in the midst of the big fjord from which the district derives its name. Resulting from countless references to Drangey both in history and culture, this small island is firmly embedded in the Icelandic psyche.

Secondly, what comes to mind is the Icelandic horse. Skagafjörður is an important breeding place for this beautiful, humble servant that enabled people to survive throughout the centuries in harsh conditions. These two distinctive features frame the different possibilities Skagafjörður has to offer; an area of natural wonders and an abundance of cultural and recreational activities.

### **An important historical area**

Skagafjörður is a municipality in the North of Iceland which covers the area from most of the peninsulas creating the fjord itself to the broad valley that bears the name of the fjord and goes all the way to the highlands. Thus, it is an area of great natural variety with steep mountains, fertile inlands and a varied

coastal environment. The biggest town of Skagafjörður is Sauðakrökur with the village of Hofsóss and other smaller villages.

Skagafjörður could also be said to be the centre of a historic circle ranging from Blönduós, west of Skagafjörður to Siglufjörður in the north and Akureyri in the east. Hólar í Hjaltadal, the old bishopric of the North, in fact used to be the most important in the North. Many who served as bishops of the North are arguably some of Iceland's most important figures.



### **Sites of Interest**

The battle of Örylgsstaðir, the biggest battle in the history of Iceland also took place in Skagafjörður, when the great families in the age of Sturlungs fought. Historic facts such as

these can be learned in Skagafjörður through various museums and places of historic importance. For example, the turf farmhouse at Glaumbær shows clearly how life used to be in rural Iceland; the Minjahúsið museum in Sauðarkrökur is unique for showing how artisans' workshops used to be and the Icelandic Emigration Centre in Hofsóss focuses on the mass emigration from Iceland to North-America in the 19th century.

### **The bad need somewhere to be**

This cliff in Skagafjörður certainly has a **mystic character** to it. According to old folktales, the cliff itself is an old female troll who turned to stone at daybreak while traversing the fjord as trolls can't handle sunlight. Grettir, in the famous Icelandic saga bearing his name, was an extremely strong but ill-tempered man, who ended his days in Drangey as an outlaw.

One of the historic bishops at Hólar, Guðmundur the Good decided he was going to bless all of Iceland by ridding the land of vile beings. But once, as he hung from the cliffs of Drangey, to expedite this work, the story says that a big hand came out of the



# RY AND NATURE

## Adventures and Historical Experiences

cliff and grabbed him. He heard a voice say, “the bad ones need somewhere to be.” The bishop decided not to bless Drangey.

This story does not frighten the locals, who go every Spring to collect eggs and birds on the cliffs of Drangey.



### An inspiring way to enjoy water

By Hofsó, you can find a great way to enjoy the view of Drangey. The new swimming pool is a masterpiece of design. Once you are in the swimming pool you get the impression that you are swimming to the sea and to Drangey while swimming in the warm water of the pool.

Skagafjörður has, in total, seven pools across the area as well as various hot springs to bath in, the most famous one being Grettislaug at Reykír.

### Being in nature among horses and birds

Skagafjörður is a fitting place to enjoy horses. Not only do the various horse-riding companies in the area provide a variety of trips but you can also visit a breeding farm, see horse shows and even experience a horse corral if you are in Skagafjörður at the right time of year!

Skagafjörður is a nice area to explore on horseback. There are many uninhabited places not too far from town providing you with the tranquility to enjoy nature. Whether you like a short trip, or a multi-day excursion to the highlands, you will be able to experience it here.

There are various other ways to enjoy the nature of Skagafjörður; watching and listening to the rich birdlife, pumping some adrenaline in your body by river rafting in the glacial rivers, hike the various trails in the area or sail on a boat to Drangey and Málmey.

At the end of a day, you can visit one of the many restaurants in the area serving high-quality food made under the Food



Chest concept, which encourages the eating of local produce.

Whether you are travelling with the whole family, by yourself or with your partner or friends, Skagafjörður has something for everybody!



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NHH

# SKAGAFJÖRÐUR'S TREASURE

*The rich heritage of the pa*



**S**kagafjörður Heritage Museum has exhibitions in four places: The old turf building at Glaumbær, Heritage House in Sauðárkrókur, Emigration Centre at Hofsó and The Icelandic Horse History Centre.

Glaumbær turf farmhouse, with its many rooms, pieces of furniture and utensils is perhaps the most interesting exhibition for foreign visitors. “It is my favourite because visitors can walk into the building and explore each one of the rooms and its contents,” says Sigríður Sigurðardóttir, the chief curator of Skagafjörður Heritage Museum.

### **The Curator's Favourites**

The Glaumbær turf farmhouse represents the final stage in the evolution of the Icelandic turf farmhouse, an evolution that is unique

to Iceland. “The evolution of the Icelandic farmhouse was influenced by the local lack of timber and its use to heat houses, the lack of locally available building material, and shortage of capital to spend on imported materials. Iceland is the only country in the world where you’ll find a passage turf and stone house with A-framed wooden gables with glass windows,” says Sigríður.

### **The Sum is Greater than the Parts**

Research plays an important role at the Skagafjörður Heritage Museum. “We have a wide range of expertise in different fields. There’s a special department which is dedicated specifically to preservation, restoration and research. Our research is primarily archaeological and historical in nature, which reflects the interest

and education of the different specialists working here. The current staff includes two archaeologists, a geographer, and a historian with further specialisations in human osteology, philosophy and ethnography.

Skagafjörður is a treasure trove when it comes to heritage studies and we strive to make our research available to laymen and specialists alike. We’ve looked at diverse topics such as the health and diet of ancient populations, settlement development, the history and craft of turf building and the history and development of horse-gear to name but a few things,” says Sigríður.

### **Four generations of watchmakers**

The Heritage House in Sauðárkrókur is another one of Sigríður’s favourite exhibitions within the museum. “The



# TROVE

*History is preserved to be enjoyed*



museum pays homage to blacksmiths, carpenters, saddle makers and watchmakers. Yes, you read correctly—watchmakers.

The Danish king visited Iceland in 1907. Young J. Frank Michelsen was in the king's entourage. He returned Sauðárkrúkur in 1909 where he set up a shop selling jewellery, clocks and watches. Today, the fourth generation of Michelsen watchmakers have a shop in Reykjavik where they sell their own quality brand-name watches.

### **Mommy! Look at the Polar Bear!**

A stuffed 2 metre-tall polar bear in a glass cage greets visitors at the Heritage House in Sauðárkrúkur. "Visitors love looking at it, especially the children," says Sigríður. The 20 year-old male polar bear on display swam to Iceland from Greenland in June



2008. Sadly, it had to be put down after it made a gesture to attack photographers and the general public who out of curiosity ventured too close. "The interest in the animal was quite understandable because polar bears are a rare sight in Iceland."

### **OPENING HOURS**

#### **The Heritage House**

Open 13-19, 10th June-26th August

#### **Glaumbær Farm**

Open 9-18, 1st June-10th September

#### **Glaumbær**



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SHV



## TRADITIONAL PASTRIES AND LOCAL FOOD

### Áskaffi Café at Glaumbær Folk Museum

**H**ave you ever walked into a place and immediately felt at home? Áskaffi coffee shop and restaurant is one of those rare finds which more and more people include as a part of their travels in the north of the country.

Auður Herdís Sigurðardóttir has been running Áskaffi since 2000. “I love what I do and do what I love,” she says. And it shows. Her coffee shop is in an old wooden house with a stone foundation which dates back to 1886. Its furniture and decorations match the period.

#### Postcards with popular recipes

After being inundated with requests for the recipe for her Sherry cake for close to two decades, Herdís finally found the solution. She’s designed two postcards with the recipe, one in English and one in German. “It’s a recipe which has belonged to the coffee shop since its opening,” Herdís says, and confesses that there’s real Sherry in it—generously measured!

#### Delicious Bread and Pastries

Delicious pastries which, in essence, look and taste the same as people used to serve in Iceland between 1940-1960 are on offer every day. There are kleinur—twisted doughnuts, lagtertur—four layer white cake with rhubarb jam, brúnkaka—four layer brown cake, and soðbrauð—fried bread. The open sandwiches are made with freshly baked bread served with simple but delicious toppings—local smoked trout, for example.



#### Soups for Small Groups

Tourist guides and their guests love Áskaffi’s signature dishes which include seafood soup made with locally produced trout and locally caught shrimp, and lamb soup made with local lamb and vegetables. “The secret to success when making lamb soup is to first boil the meat and the bones together before adding the vegetables and removing the bones,” says Herdís. Soups can be ordered for groups of 10-40 at a time.

#### New in 2012

Salting, smoking and pickling preceded refrigeration as a way to preserve food in Iceland. This summer, Herdís offers a taste of traditional food preserved in the old style served on a plate which she designed. “The idea is to give our customers the opportunity to taste traditional salted, smoked and pickled food without having to buy three separate dishes.” The plate designed by Herdís is a souvenir and is included in the price.



-SHV

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it is for accommodation, the swimming pool, the church, the Icelandic Horse History Centre or the restaurant.

Exploring the various hiking routes around Hólar is especially popular. In July, there will be two organised hiking tours from Hólar, both including accommodation, food, driving, access to swimming pool and guiding. The shorter one, which will take place 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> July, is a one day tour and consists of walking an old route over the heath of Heljardalur. This route used to be the main cross-over from Eyjafjörður and Akureyri to the bishop's seat and school at Hólar.

The longer tour, 29<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> July, actually consists of three daytrips from Hólar, one slightly lighter one while the other two are refreshing walks to the neighbouring mountains, Grasárdalshnjúkur and Hólabyrða. After the walks, the hikers get the chance to relax stiff muscles in the swimming pool and enjoy the fine wining and dining at Hólar.

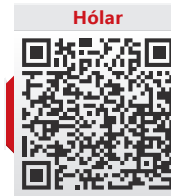
## HÓLAR IN HJALTADAL

*Surrounded by Hiking Possibilities of all kinds*

Hólar í Hjalptadal was the centre of the North during most of Iceland's history, holding the Northern bishop's seat until 1798. Its own history is, furthermore, highly intertwined with education, as there used to be a Latin school and a

Cathedral school there, which today has become an agricultural college in Hólar.

In this beautiful, historic spot, surrounded by forested hills, lives a close community of 200 people, students and staff of the college. It is a popular stop for travelling Icelanders, whether



Hólar

-KB

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## Hótel Varmahlíð welcomes you

We offer personal service and casual atmosphere in a small, comfortable, three star hotel. Hotel Varmahlíð has 19 rooms with private facilities and is conveniently located by route 1.

Our **Restaurant** focuses on local cuisine from the Skagafjörður region and welcomes all travellers who want to try some tasty dishes from our menu.




Skagafjörður welcomes you all year round. Experience summer joy or winter pleasure



Check out our website [www.hotelvarmahlid.is](http://www.hotelvarmahlid.is) for online booking



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## Tröllaskagi Guesthouse

A homey guesthouse in Siglufjörður's centre. All the rooms are spacious and each room has a special character. There are 12 double rooms, 6 singles and 4 triple rooms. The North restaurant and bar serves an á la carte menu. It seats 100. The bar is open until 1 am each night.

🏠 Lækjargötu 10 • 580 Siglufirði ☎ +354 467 2100 ✉ northhotels@northhotels.is 🌐 www.northhotels.is

## Folk Music Center

Icelandic traditional music and dance  
 Folk Music Festival July 4-8, 2012  
 Opening hrs: 12-6 pm daily  
 June-August



🏠 Norðurgötu 1 • 580 Siglufirði ☎ +354 467 2300 🌐 www.folkmusik.is



# Allinn

Allinn restaurant specialises in Icelandic home cooking and pizzas. It is situated in a beautifully restored house overlooking Siglufjörður's main square. It is reasonably priced and suits people of all ages.

🏠 Aðalgata 30 • 580 Siglufjörður ☎ +354 467 1111



## The Herring Museum

The Herring Era Museum in Siglufjörður is an award-winning museum bringing to life the 'glory days' of Iceland's herring fishing industry in three different buildings.

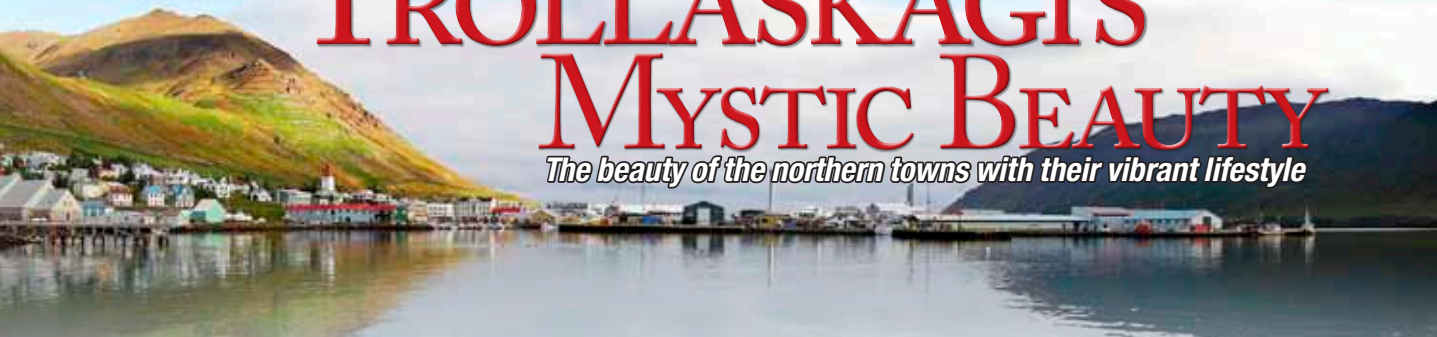
🏠 Snorrögötu 16 • 580 Siglufirði ☎ +354 467 1604 ✉ safn@sild.is 🌐 www.sild.is





# TRÖLLASKAGI'S MYSTIC BEAUTY

*The beauty of the northern towns with their vibrant lifestyle*




**TORGID RESTAURANT**

A cosy restaurant situated by Siglufjörður's main square renowned for making the best pizzas in Siglufjörður while offering a range of fast foods, soup, salad bar, coffee and cakes. The most popular dishes are the deepfried fish served with salad and chips and the chicken salad—grilled chicken breast mixed with fresh crisp lettuce, cucumbers, tomatoes and bacon!

🏠 Aðalgötu 32 • 580 Siglufirði ☎ +354 467 2323



**Aðalbakari**  
Bakery is by the main square of Siglufjörður

Great variety of freshly baked breads, buns, sandwiches, pastries and cakes along with a lunch menu with soups and pasta.

🏠 Aðalgötu 28 • 580 Siglufirði ☎ +354 4671720



## EATING AT THE END OF THE WORLD

*The bright yellow house is the restaurant and the red one, the café in Siglufjörður*

Siglufjörður feels like it is as far north as you can go. This former herring centre is set in a beautiful fjord and is a very popular place to hike from and enjoy the extraordinary birdlife and nature. The pristine beauty of the landscape is matched only by the atmosphere of the town, where there is much to see and do.

When you have built up a good appetite in the nature, you know you can dine at one of the best restaurants outside Reykjavik.

Hannes Boy is the bright yellow building right on the harbour, just a few feet from the boats, landing their fresh fish. Inside, the wood-beamed restaurant, with its lantern wall lights, wooden tables and chairs is bright and cheerful. The menu includes fish and lamb and you're guaranteed a delicious meal in the inspiring atmosphere of this warm and welcoming fishing town.

If you'd rather have something lighter, the Kaffi Rauðka in the equally bright

red building next door is your place. This is a lively place—especially on Friday and Saturday nights, with its live bands. It's a great spot for lunch, for getting to know the local people and enjoying their lifestyle.

-HB

**Rauðka**



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✉ raudka@raudka.is  
🌐 www.raudka.is

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## OUTDOOR LIFE TO THE FULL

*Anyone who loves the outdoors will find all they can wish for in Fjallabyggð*

**Y**ou would think that, as you get closer to the North Pole, all you would see is snow and desolation. In winter, possibly—only that just makes the snow sports all the more exciting with awesome ski slopes, skating and snowmobiles and fishing through the ice.

Fjallabyggð is almost as far north as you can go. You feel like you're at the end of the world. Yet here, above Akureyri, the towns of Ólafsfjörður and Siglufjörður are alive with activity year round. They merged as one county in 2006 and, with the completion of the tunnel linking them that opened in 2010, travel became much easier.

### Lively activities and long days

With the Spring, everything is completely different. The birds know it and fly in by droves—followed by the experienced bird watchers and photographers. The beautiful nature opens up to the hiking community, with a multitude of different hikes marked, with various degrees of difficulty. There is an excellent map produced by the University of Hólar. The countryside is breathtaking in its beauty and is so easily accessible from the two towns. It's a landscape of mountains and valleys, streams, waterfalls and hidden meadows, lakes and black sand beaches, with picturesque vistas at every turn.

The longer days make other activities both possible and really enjoyable—like taking midnight sailing trips across the Arctic Circle or whalewatching from Ólafsfjörður. Fishing—whether from the harbour piers, on the lakes, in the rivers and streams or out on the sea—is also very popular. Many visitors like to combine hiking, sailing, fishing or boating trips together, getting the most out of their days.

There are two 9-hole golf courses, where you can play under the midnight sun and two swimming pools, with jacuzzis to relax in after a day's hike.

There are plenty of different types of accommodation and restaurants, fast-food and cafés with live music in both towns to suit every taste as the people here love to enjoy life.

### Centre of Culture

Fjallabyggð has made up for their relative isolation by investing in cultural activities. There is a rich heritage of award-winning museums like the Herring Museum, the Folk



Music Centre (with many activities for all ages and tastes), the Poetry Museum (where you can buy poetry old and new), Natural History Museum (specialising in the birdlife of the area), Art Museum (with probably the best private collection in the country) and festivals such as the Music festival in Siglufjörður in the first week of July.

*Fjallabyggð is a vibrant community in which you will find a warm welcome.*

### Summer Festivals in the Tröllaskagi area

Blue North Music Festival in Ólafsfjörður.....	26–30. June
Folk Music Festival in Siglufjörður.....	4–8. July
Herring Adventure in Siglufjörður.....	2–6. August
Berry Picking Days in Ólafsfjörður.....	17–19. August

-ASF

**Fjallabyggð**



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**+354 464 9100**  
 none  
[www.fjallabyggd.is](http://www.fjallabyggd.is)

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# AT THE TOP OF THE WORLD

*Experience Siglufjörður's beauty from Hvanneyri Guesthouse*

Many visitors looking for the real essence of Iceland find it when visiting the northerly town of Siglufjörður, the former herring capital of Iceland.

The fishing boom eventually ended, but the people stayed, including the family in Hvanneyri Guesthouse. The family patriarch had, in fact, worked in Siglufjörður's fishing industry since he was six years old until the last fish processing plant closed this year.



The Guesthouse is located on the main street and is thus within arms' reach of the town's restaurants, shops and bakery, making it an ideal place to set up base during a stay in Tröllaskagi.

Accommodation ranges from dorms to lavish suites, something of which Katrín and her family are especially proud—offering each customer a room to fit their taste and budget.

## Returning Friends

A family-run business, Guesthouse Hvanneyri puts special emphasis on friendly service. "We feel our customers appreciate

this and many of them keep returning. In fact, I just received baby gifts for my newborn from one of our customers. I guess it doesn't get any more personal than that," says Katrín.

## A Trip into Icelandic Culture

The town has a lot to offer in itself. The people of Siglufjörður are particularly proud of their museums: The Herring Era Museum and the Folk Music Centre, where you can delve into Iceland's folk music heritage, thanks to Rev. Bjarni Þorsteinsson, a former resident of Siglufjörður, who diligently collected and documented hundreds of folk songs from the year 1880 onwards. That's not to mention the beauty of the Tröllaskagi area.



Hvanneyri Guesthouse

-ASF



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# HEAR THE SINGING

*All that breaks the stillness is the song of the birds*

In the early Spring, birds arrive from all parts of the world. They are dressing in the finery of their summer colours for the mating season while the days are growing longer as summer approaches. The lake is as clear as glass in the stillness of the evening twilight, broken only by the birdsong.

We are high in the North, on the Tröllaskagi Peninsula at the Brimnes Hotel and Bungalows, located on the banks of



Ólafsfjörður. It offers 11 double rooms with bath, and 8 Finnish-style log cabins, accommodating 5–6 people each. The self-contained holiday cottages are perfect for families or groups and include a lounge, kitchenette, bath, ground-floor bedroom and sleeping loft for the kids, as well as a cosy, private hot-tub on each veranda, where you can relax over a bottle of wine from the hotel's extensive wine list. Whether you are relaxing or involved in the exertions of an active sport, the hotel's restaurant offers everything from quick snacks to full course meals.

Hotel manager, Axel Pétur Ásgeirsson, is always on hand to advise and organise sightseeing and activities in the region: boat trips, trout fishing on the lake, whale-watching, mountain hiking, kayaking, diving, skiing, horse riding, golf, river rafting, snowmobiling, art exhibitions, museums historical places of interest and, of course, bird watching and more.

Brimnes hótel

-ASF



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## RIDING THE NORTH

*Polar Hestar's Summer Group Tours*

**P**olar Hestar Tours of North Iceland is one of Iceland's top destinations for an Icelandic horse riding experience. The serenity of countryside in the vicinity of Eyjafjörður fjord near Grenivik, is the backdrop to an array of exciting excursions for intermediate to advanced riders of all ages, taking place this summer at Polar Hestar Tours.

### A little introduction to set the scene...

After crossing the sea-level road from Akureyri that bridges the east and west flanks of Eyjafjörður fjord, the road winds its way to the mountaintop where you are met with an astonishing view of snow-capped peaks in the distance, the little picturesque town of Akureyri far below and the fjord itself, the longest in Iceland, silently stretching out to the Arctic Sea. Tranquil farms with fresh coats of red paint and flocks of white sheep dot the hillsides, the lush greens of the cultivated land are complimented by the deep blues of sky and sea. This then, is the road to Grýtubakki farm, home of Polar Hestar Tours.



### Gods and Sagas Tour

Iceland comes alive on this 5-day, 4-night tour that takes you on an unforgettable journey. Your horse is your constant companion through the verdant valleys of the North, as you wind your way over ancient sheep paths to visit the diverse landscape around the historic Goðafoss, Ullafoss and Barnafoss waterfalls and listen to stories of Viking gods and warriors.

♦ *This tour is for intermediate riders.*

### Ride with the Elves Tour

Ride to Grenivik, stopping at the Laufás Turf farm and museum. Beautiful views over the fjord and the island of Hrisey. Extinct volcanoes, silent glaciers and hidden waterfalls surround you and, at the highest point, a tremendous view out to the Arctic Ocean awaits your gaze.

♦ *An 8-day, 7-night tour for intermediate riders.*

### Fascinating North Iceland

You will ride from Fremstafell farmhouse to the impressive Goðafoss waterfall, into the Bárðardalur valley and up to the famous Aldeyrfoss waterfall, known for its intriguing basaltic columns and onwards to explore the volcanic region of Lake Mývatn.

♦ *This is a challenging tour of 8 days and 7 nights for very experienced riders.*

*Polar Hestar Tours which celebrates its 27<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2012, is run by the husband and wife team of Stefán and Juliane and has been a firm favourite with horse lovers from a lot of countries, many of whom return year after year.*

**Pólar Hestar**



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 www.polarhestar.is

-ASF

# [ RUB23 ]

RESTAURANT

FISH - MEAT - SUSHI

## Funky, fresh and full of flavour!



Rub23 is mainly a seafood restaurant with variations of fish species and large variety of sushi and meat courses.

What makes the restaurant unique both in Iceland and internationally is the varied way in which the menu is put together, including ready-made spice mixtures that customers can choose from, the so-called RUB. RUB has become a well known term for spice mixtures that are either put onto or rubbed into food, as the name indicates.



**LUNCH** OPEN FROM 11:30 - 14:00 Mon. - Fri.

**DINNER** OPEN EVERY DAY FROM 17:30

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RUB23 | Kaupvangsstræti 6 | 600 Akureyri  
Phone: +354 462 2223 | rub23@rub23.is

[www.rub23.is](http://www.rub23.is)



# CELEBRATING THE HEART OF MÝ

*The Centenary of Gamlibær and the 70th anniversary of Hótel Reynihlíð*

There were no paved roads or cars in the north 100 years ago. Usually, one farm in the area would receive visitors, feed them, provide a bed for the night and care for their needs. It could be a burden on their resources but it was considered a natural service by the farmers, whose family would usually give up their beds to the travellers.

Reykjahlíð in the Mývatn area was the last point before the arduous trek through the highlands for those heading east. It was also the first stop for weary travellers who had struggled over the mountains on their way to Akureyri. There was therefore always a sigh of relief when the lights of Gamlibær in Reykjahlíð came into view from either direction. This was a home where there was good food, warm hospitality and a comfortable bed. Built to replace the old farmhouse in 1912, with extra room for guests, this rugged

stone building has welcomed thousands of travellers in its hundred-year life.



It is one of the oldest stone houses in North Iceland and is today, very popular as a country tavern. A café by day, it turns into restaurant in the evening and a pub at night, with live music provided both by professional entertainers and the guests themselves. It now has an international clientele, whose natural song and poetry talents are. On magical

summer nights, they vie with the singing of multitudes of different birds.

With the arrival of motorised traffic, more people than ever were looking for a place to stay. The family saw the need to expand and built a home in 1942 with five bedrooms, followed in 1949 with the first Hótel, Reynihlíð, with 19 rooms and a restaurant seating 100 guests.

The advent of tourism and the opening of a diatomite factory led to further expansion until today, when it has 41 spacious rooms, all fully renovated. It is a 4-star Hótel with a high standard of customer service. The warm welcome each guest is met with is the signature mark of Hótel Reynihlíð. The family and staff do their best to make each guest feel welcome. Now with conference facilities, the Myllan restaurant and the Gamlibær Café-Bar, Hótel Reynihlíð is the heart of hospitality in Mývatn.





**MÝVATN**

The newest addition to the Hótel Reykhlíð family is the Hótel Reykhlíð, across the road. It is a small Hótel situated right on the edge of the lake, with 9 comfortable en-suite rooms and magnificent views over the lake.



### Birds from all over the world

It's a dream for bird enthusiasts to be able to watch rare birds like Slavonian grebe, floating on its nest, her chicks on her back, mere feet from their bedroom window! The birds put weary travellers to sleep with soothing lullabies on bright summer nights, only to burst into joyful song as the sun rises higher.

Every year around 30,000 migratory and thousands of non-migratory birds breed at Lake Mývatn. Of a total of 84 species, 16 are various species of duck. The lake is Europe's only breeding place for harlequin ducks, Barrow's goldeneyes and great northern divers.

### Geology in all shapes and colours

The geology is also spectacular. For example, take the majestic mountains, gaping fissures with pools of hot water, lava fields of unusual textures, volcanic craters of all possible types

and some with sapphire blue lakes, colourful solfataras and bubbling pools of hot viscous mud of amazing patterns and colours, not to mention sites like Dimmuborgir.

### A Hundred Years of Hospitality

The ancestors of the founders of Hótel Reykhlíð are from the same family as Hótel Reykhlíð, who originally built Gamlibær and the old farm in Reykhlíð. Thousands of visitors have enjoyed the hospitality of the Reykhlíð family for 100 years. With hospitality like this, they will doubtless continue to do so.

-JB

Hótel Reykhlíð



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www.reykhlid.is



**T**op sites: You don't need to go far to watch birds in Iceland as there are good birdwatching sites almost anywhere, even in central Reykjavík. Among the places most regularly visited by overseas birdwatchers are the Snæfellsnes peninsula in western Iceland, the vast sea-cliffs at Látrabjarg in



# Best in Birdwatching

*Where and when to watch birds in Iceland*

the West Fjords, the Flói Nature Reserve in southern Iceland and the Vestmannaeyjar archipelago off the south coast. Perhaps the most famous birdwatching site in Iceland, however, is the Mývatn-Laxá area in north-east Iceland, where more species of duck breed than anywhere else in Europe, 14 species in total, in addition to numerous other species. However, birds can be found throughout the country and the best areas are often close to water. This is especially true in winter, when birdwatching on the coast is almost always more rewarding than inland. Many European birdwatchers are particular keen to see Iceland's 'Big Four', i.e. Harlequin Duck, Barrow's Goldeneye, Gyr Falcon and Brünnich's Guillemot, all of which are relatively easy to find at the right time of year or in the right areas.





# catching

## Other target species

Iceland represents the southernmost limit of the breeding range for several High Arctic birds. Few places offer better opportunities than Iceland to see Pink-footed Goose, Long-tailed Duck, Ptarmigan, Gyr Falcon, Red Phalarope, Red-necked Phalarope, Glaucous Gull, Brünnich's Guillemot and Snow Bunting. Red Phalarope, Gyr Falcon and White-tailed Eagle all enjoy special protection and visiting a nesting site of these species is strictly prohibited.

Another popular bird is the Atlantic Puffin, which is best seen in the Westman Islands archipelago, the islands of Breiðafjörður bay, the cliffs at Látrabjarg or in Borgarfjörður eystri.

## When they can be seen

Birdwatching is an all-year activity in Iceland. The best time of year, in the view of the author, is from mid-April to the end of June. Spring migration is at its peak from mid-April to mid-May, when the nesting

season begins. This peaks in June, and peters out in July. Autumn migration lasts from late July until the end of October.



Coastal seas, especially off the southwest, are relatively warm due to the influence of the Gulf Stream, while inland, some bodies of water remain unfrozen throughout the winter due to geothermal springs or spring-fed rivers, and so Iceland's winter birdlife is quite varied.

## The origins of Iceland's birds

Iceland's flora and fauna is largely European (Western Palearctic) in origin. Several species, however, have colonised the country from the west, and Iceland can therefore said to be the meeting point of east and west. Iceland furthermore marks the southern breeding limit for several species and the northern limit for several others and, as such, is also the meeting point of north and south. *-JÓH*

Jóhann Óli is President of BirdLife Iceland and author of the Icelandic Bird Guide.

Translation by Edward B. Rickson

Images by © Jóhann Óli Hilmarsson



### Árból Guest House

This beautiful old guesthouse, a former governor's house, is located in the center of Húsavík. The rooms, with shared bathrooms, overlook the stream in the town's park, the bay and the harbor. A good breakfast and a friendly atmosphere contribute to a relaxing stay in Húsavík.

🏠 Ásgarðspegí 2 • 640 Húsavík    ☎ +354 464 2220  
 ✉ [guest.hus@sinnet.is](mailto:guest.hus@sinnet.is)    🌐 [www.arbol.is](http://www.arbol.is)

### Heidarbaer

Heidarbaer Country Guesthouse is conveniently located in Reykjahverfi between Húsavík and Mývatn (road 87). Shop, restaurant, swimming pool, camping place and a sleeping-bag accommodation. Near main attractions of north-east Iceland – Mývatn, Goðafoss, Asbyrgi, Jokulsargljufur and Laxa River in Aðaldalur.

🏠 Reykjahverfi • 640 Húsavík    ☎ +354 464 3918  
 ✉ [heidarbaer@sinnet.is](mailto:heidarbaer@sinnet.is)    🌐 [www.heidarbaer.is](http://www.heidarbaer.is)

### Fish & Chips

A small fast food kiosk and take away specializing in fish and chips, using the freshest cod or bacalao available. Situated by the marina in Húsavík, right below the church. On sunny days guests can sit inside or out, with a beautiful view over the colourful Húsavík harbour.

Open every day all summer from 11:30 to 20:00

🏠 Hafnarstétt 21 • 640 Húsavík    ☎ +354 891 8460



The guest have access to two bathrooms with showers and a bathtub and a kitchen with a broiler. Wireless Internet access is possible as well as the free use of the house computer. A washing machine and clothes line outside are available for use when needed.

### Your room in the North

Every effort has been made to create a home away from home and within your room at Sigtún Guesthouse, the world can either be shut out or welcomed with open arms. Clean, soft and inviting the pillows will cradle your secrets and your dreams.

**Guesthouse Sigtún** -SS

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 🌐 [www.gsigtun.is](http://www.gsigtun.is)

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# A HOME AWAY FROM HOME

*Sigtún Guesthouse in Husavík*

The timelessness of a typical Icelandic fishing village is reflected in Husavík with its quiet streets and picturesque houses. Here, you can soak up the atmosphere of times past while staying at Sigtún Guesthouse.

### Comfort without overcrowding

A renovated old family house, the guesthouse is situated just five minutes

walk from the harbour, the constant source of life and profit for the community. This friendly little house has eight rooms with made-up beds, two single rooms, four double or twin rooms with separate beds and one family room with comfortable beds for six. In total, Sigtún has the capacity to house sixteen guests, thus creating a nice closeness without ever being overcrowded.



# HÚSAVÍK

## THE WHALE WATCHING CAPITAL OF ICELAND

### Heimabakarí

Bakery and café

A beautiful bakery and café with that seats 50 people. Breakfast is served weekdays from 7:30 to 10.00 and Saturdays from 8.00 to 10.00. Breakfast is not available on Sundays. A wide variety of freshly baked healthy breads, buns, sandwiches, pastries and cakes are available. It's an ideal place to take a break and stock up for your onwards journey or just to relax and enjoy a delicious cake and real hot chocolate.

🏠 Garðarsbraut 15 • 640 Húsavík 📞 +354 464 2900  
✉ heimabakarí@simnet.is 🌐 www.heimabakarí.is



### Húsavík museum

Folk museum, maritime exhibition, kids' playroom, museum shop.

Open daily 10-18

🏠 Stóragarói 17 • 640 Húsavík 📞 +354 464 1860  
✉ safnahus@husmus.is 🌐 www.husmus.is

## TV CHEF COMES HOME TO COOK

*Húsavík's Pallurinn restaurant features a giant gourmet barbeque*

Vikings travel the world—but there's no place like home. Völundur lived in the Caribbean for 12 years, wrote a book that won the Gourmand World Cookbooks Award and which has just been made into a BBC Living TV series, which is being broadcast worldwide. He is now living his dream of cooking in his home town of Húsavík in North Iceland in his newly-opened restaurant down by the harbour, the Pallurinn.

**Delicious Dining—Delightful View**  
'Pallurinn' is Icelandic for 'The Deck' and you couldn't have a finer view of the harbour and the bay. It is located right behind the Gentle Giants ticket office - with a giant heated tent and an equally giant barbeque, which is an engineering feat in itself.

So now you can taste the reason for his popularity yourself, whilst you spend the evening looking out over the spectacular



view of the bay as you dine on delicious barbequed lamb or fresh seafood, straight from the fishing boats in the harbour below.

### Barbequed with Birch

If you wonder where that special taste in the meat comes from, Völundur doesn't cook with charcoal, as you would find in most barbeques; he uses birch wood—and you can really tell the difference!

—ASF



Pallurinn Restaurant



🏠 Hafnastétt 7 • 640 Húsavík  
📞 +354 496 1440  
✉ info@pallurinn.is  
🌐 www.pallurinn.is

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## THE BIGGEST BONES YOU'LL EVER SEE!

*Whale bones hang from the Roof at Húsavík Whale Museum*

If you'd like to see whale bones and learn how whales impacted Icelandic culture throughout the ages, visit the popular Húsavík Whale Museum in the north of Iceland. "People visit the museum because it is the best way to learn about whales and their environment without actually diving into the ocean," says curator Hermann Bárðarson, a biologist with a keen interest in whales. "Last year, 21,000 people of all ages visited the museum."

### Whale Skeletons

The crown jewel of the museum, so to speak, is the 13 metre-long skeleton of a sperm whale. There are 8 more skeletons on display. "Only when one is close to one of these skeletons does one realise how large whales actually are and how strikingly

similar their anatomy is to human anatomy," says Bárðarson. "Most people never have the opportunity to come in close contact with a whale—simply because their ocean habitat is so different from ours. This is a real pity. It is our mission at the museum to interpret everything about whales to the general public. We are here to spark curiosity, disseminate knowledge and foster respect for these animals."

### Museum for all Ages

"Our museum is perhaps the most family-friendly museum in the country," says Bárðarson. "Its content comes from the depths of the sea which is normally hidden from humans. It comes from a place that is generally thought of as dangerous, lifeless, cold and dark—but nothing could be

further from the truth, of course. Children are especially receptive to the mysterious nature of this hidden world. We like to believe that we're successful in delivering a positive experience for children by bringing this hidden world a little closer. The museum receives school groups from all parts of Iceland throughout the winter. The visits are an integral part of the children's education about the environment."

### Fostering a Community Spirit

The Whale museum has become an integral part of the local community. It is an attraction in its own right but it also supports the budding whale-watching industry in the Skjálfandaflói Bay. "Last year 50,000 people visited Húsavík exclusively to go whale watching and visit the Whale Museum. The Whale Museum supports the overall visitor experience and fosters the community spirit—everyone in Húsavík is proud of the museum. It also provides an important employment opportunity for professionals, academics, unskilled people and volunteers in a disused slaughterhouse," says Bárðarson. "Come and see the whale skeletons and learn how whales have impacted Icelandic culture."

-SHV



**Hvalsafnið**

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# MEMORIES OF THE OLD

*Preserving the historical heritage in North East Iceland*

Once, Iceland was home to people who knew deprivation and hardship all too well. The responsibility to preserve the ancestral heritage of Píngeyjarsýsla is in the hands of the Húsavík Museum in N.E. Iceland.

## Two permanent exhibitions

The 'Maritime Exhibition' and 'Daily Life and Nature-100 years in Píngeyjarsýsla' are on display in the Húsavík Museum.

Daily Life and Nature - 100 years in Píngeyjarsýsla opened two years ago on the main floor and is nominated for the Icelandic

Museum Award 2012. It gives an insight into man's relationship with nature and how local homesteads were mostly self-sufficient from 1850 to 1950.

The Maritime Exhibition includes artefacts such as boats and fishing gear exhibited both outside and inside.

Also in the Museum, are an art gallery, the Kids' Playroom, the Museum café and Shop.

## Living Heritage

Freestanding regional exhibitions give an insight into the long history of settlement



in the area. Grenjaðarstaðir is an old farm from the Settlement Era and has served as a church, parsonage and a post office. Help yourself to coffee and tea, free of charge, and enjoy a light meal of your own in an authentic Icelandic farm.

Snartarstaðir is a museum and a gift shop 2 kilometres from Kópasker. The rich collection of local handicraft such as embroidery and knitted clothing portray daily life in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

*The museums are truly a living memory of the past.*



Húsavík Museum



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-JB

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# WHALE WATCHING

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# WE ARE PROUD TO WELCOME YOU TO VATNAJÖKULL NATIONAL PARK!

Vatnajökull National Park is Iceland's newest protected area, established in 2008. With a total area of roughly 13,200 km<sup>2</sup> it is by far the largest national park in Iceland as well as in Western Europe.

Key features of the park are the ice cap of the Vatnajökull Glacier (8,200 km<sup>2</sup>) and several highly active volcanic systems within and outside the ice cap. The interplay of ice and fire is the single most important force in shaping the nature of the park. As a result, one can find in one place an unparalleled range of volcanic-, geothermal- and other landscape features.

We offer information at our three Visitor Centres, Gljúfrastofa, Snæfellsstofa and Skaftafellsstofa. Information Centres are situated at Kirkjubæjarklaustur and Höfn.

More information at our website [www.vjp.is](http://www.vjp.is)





© Guðmundur Ógmundsson

▲ Svartifoss



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▲ Dettifoss



© Svartifossing, G. Þórisson

▲ Hiking Geldingafell, Snæfell in the distance



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▲ Morsárdalur



© Ragnína Þreinsdóttir

▲ Langisjór



© Einar Ragnar Sigurðsson

▲ Askja and Lake Óskjuvatn

# EAST ICELAND

– a hiking haven

**E**ast Iceland is a magnificent wonderland where hikers, wanderers, bird-watchers, kayakers and nature lovers find everything their heart desires; wilderness, solitude, challenge, new horizons—and for some, even peace of mind. But more than anything, East Iceland is known for great outdoor activities, hiking, riding, fishing, exploring, and friendly fishing villages for après adventure.

## Hikes and treks for everyone

Hiking is by far the East Iceland traveller's best way to enjoy the refreshing wilderness. The region is renowned for interesting and diverse routes, ranging from day hikes to adventure-rich multi-day treks. Good hiking maps of the whole region are available at Tourist Information Centres and a number of paths have been marked for safer hiking and optimum enjoyment.



## Mt. Snæfell—Lónsöræfi

Mt. Snæfell, the 1833 extinct volcano and Iceland's highest mountain outside the glacier massif of Vatnajökull, presents a magnificent view from the top.

There are guided tours up and around this impressive volcano and the surroundings offer some great sights, such as lush green moss and springs, sparkling in between black sands. Herds of wild reindeer and pink-footed geese roam around. Nearby, Brúarjökull probably offers one of the easiest accesses to explore a tremendous ice sheet.

For the avid hiker, the Snæfell–Lónsöræfi trail, with stunning landscapes in the Vatnajökull National Park, is a tempting and trying solitary route across the Eyjabakkajökull glacier before dropping down to the the stunning Lónsöræfi highlands, and the view of expansive green valleys with countless waterfalls, such as Geithellnadalur, Hofsdalur or Víðidalur.



## Kverkfjöll

A tour to Kverkfjöll, experiencing the unique interplay of ice and fire in the imposing surroundings, is an experience. Climb to the hot spring valley for a magnificent view of boiling mud springs melting a labyrinth of caves through the great Vatnajökull glacier. Try soaking your sore feet in the warm volcanic waters flowing from the mouth of the great Kverkfjöll ice cave. Although the white giant looks peaceful enough, never forget that there are many dangers hidden in the moving ice.

## Víknaslóðir

The 150 km marked paths of the Víknaslóðir (Desert Inlets) in Borgarfjörður eystra,





enable you to have views of beautiful coastlines, mountain ridges, abandoned farmhouses, birdlife, arctic fauna and, with a little luck, maybe even reindeer. The area is known for colourful mountains and semi precious stones, as well as one of the best places to watch puffins. Some of the best day hikes are without a doubt to be found here, including one of Iceland's best kept secrets—the monumental Stóruurð, a labyrinth of enormous rocks through which a little river winds its way and calm turquoise ponds of icy water lie hidden among the huge boulders, lined by flat banks of short, green grass. Just the perfect way to enjoy the best unspoilt, breathtaking nature.

### Skálanes

For those preferring to enjoy a maritime view, a unique opportunity to experience the beauty and calm of East Iceland are its fjords. Visit the wonderful Nature heritage centre at Skálanes at the furthest shore of beautiful Seyðisfjörður or enjoy the ride to Mjóifjörður, one of Iceland's most celebrated fjords, with the breathtaking Klifurbrekkufofossar waterfalls.

### Eskifjörður - Norðfjörður

Different, but no less attractive, is the easternmost part, the Gerpissvæði between Eskifjörður and Norðfjörður, where skyscraping peaks join forces with the heavy waves of the Atlantic. The great

variety in coasts is phenomenal. Brightly coloured pebble beaches, black sand beaches of Vöðlavík, awesome sheer cliffs, pristine fjords lined with eider ducks, old ruins of ancient farmsteads and the occasional reindeer herd in deserted coves give you an 'out of this world' feeling of freedom and eternity. Then, finish with a short hike to Helgustaðanáma, the old Iceland Spar mine in Eskifjörður.

### Around Egilsstaðir

For some shorter options, the Hiking Pearls of Fljótsdalshérað, the area around Egilsstaðir give you some great possibilities. Don't miss the 40-minute climb to Iceland's 2nd highest waterfall, Hengifoss, the beautiful basalt pillars of Litlanesfoss in Fljótsdalur, or a stroll in the Hallormsstaður arctic birch forest. They are all truly something to write home about, as are



the solitude of Hjalpleysa, the ½ day hike by Stóra-Sandfell, through mindblowing monuments of the Ice Age. Enjoy a stroll at Húsey or spend a day at Iceland's strangest beach, Þerribjörg, by the Hellisheiði pass to Vopnafjörður. Visit the Elf-lady trail and the Earth history landbridge by the Bustarfell folk museum in Vopnafjörður. This is to name just a few of the wonderful options open to you in this hikers' paradise.

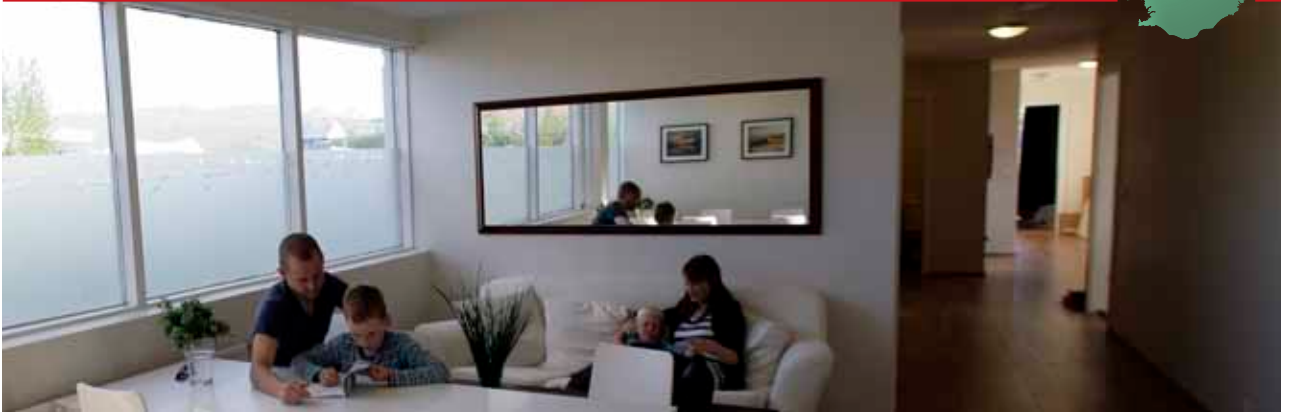
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## NEAT AS A PIN

*Egilsstaðir's Lyngás Guesthouse is fresh and clean*

Opened in 2010, Lyngás Guesthouse gives guests in Egilsstaðir the option of good quality accommodation at an affordable price. Lyngás is located in the centre of town and has six rooms suited for individuals, couples or groups of up to seven. White walls, accented with bright photos of plant life emphasise clean cut minimalism. All rooms share bathrooms, kitchen, and the living room with free wireless access throughout the guesthouse.



From the start of autumn, guests can get excellent bargains at this clean and modern guesthouse just a few minutes walk from Egilsstaðir's pool and art museum. Guests on a tighter budget can bring their sleeping bag for a reduced price or pay a small fee for the convenience of a made up bed.

Lyngás Gistiheimili

-KB



Lyngási 5-7 • 700 Egilsstöðum  
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welcome to pop in for the reasonably-priced lunch or dinner offerings of beef goulash, lasagna, meat sandwiches and a variety of traditional skyr desserts, pancakes, waffles and other sweet treats.



All Egilsstaðir Farm products are sold retail to consumers. Mince, fillet, prime rib and ribeye steaks can all be bought at the shop in pre-cut frozen form.

Dairy products include plain and blueberry skyr, skyr desserts, feta cheese, and milk—all packaged and labeled with the attractive Fjóshornið logo on the containers.

## COWSHED CORNER

*Straight from the Farm in East Iceland's Fjóshornið in Egilsstaðir*

Practically everyone has heard of the curds and whey that Little Miss Muffet made famous. But not many people know that the skyr that is so popular in Iceland is, in fact, a variation of those curds (minus the whey).

Because of the growing demand for pure Icelandic dairy and beef products, Egilsstaðir

Farm recently opened a farmer's market on its premises, offering pure Icelandic dairy products, straight from their own milk production as well as a variety of cuts of beef from its own cattle herds. Open in summer only, weekdays from 11.00 to 18.00 and weekends from 14.00 to 17.00, visitors are

Fjóshornið

-EMV

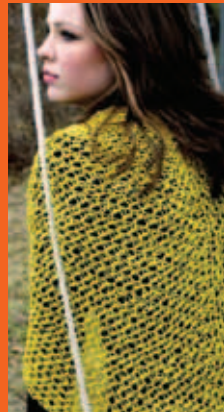
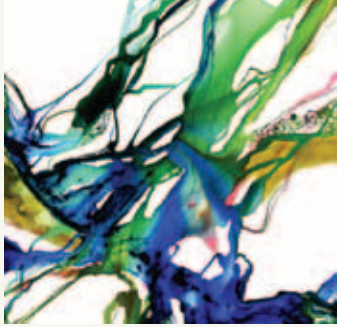


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WOOL AND LOCAL WOOD

EAST ICELAND LOCAL FOOD & SOUVENIRS





**A bit of history**

The guest house shares sprawling estate grounds with Egilsstaðir Farm, which has been operating continuously for centuries. The town of Egilsstaðir grew up around the farm and eventually became the site of the major crossroads of East Iceland. Today, the farm continues its operations with 70 cows that provide the hotel with all its dairy products, such as milk, skyr, yogurt and cheese, as well as some of the highest quality beef products in Iceland.

The kitchen is overseen by Hulda Danielsdóttir who is fast gaining a reputation for her creative cooking skills and blending of traditional and progressive cuisine, sourcing most of the ingredients either locally or from around East Iceland. The restaurant prides itself on its beef tenderloin from Egilsstaðir Farm as well as its delectable handmade ice cream and sorbets, both of which come highly recommended.

**AT THE EASTERN CROSSROADS**

*Egilsstaðir Guest House*

**E**gilsstaðir Guest House, on the shores of Lake Logurinn in the town of Egilsstaðir, is a remarkable old world hotel that has been accommodating guests since 1884. Eighteen renovated double rooms, all with en suite bathroom, plus a fine dining restaurant, complete with white linen tablecloths and views overlooking the garden and lake, make this a cosy and romantic choice for an overnight stay or longer.



**Gistihúsið Egilsstaðir**

-EMV



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French fishermen. A luxury 4-star hotel is planned for the old hospital built in 1903, which includes the French consulate and doctors' offices and will be ready for visitors in the spring of 2014.



**THE FRENCH CONNECTION**

*Alive and well at Café Sumarlína in Fáskrúðsfjörður*

**I**n operation since 2002, Café Sumarlína on the Eastern Fjord of Fáskrúðsfjörður is well known for their Belgian waffles with whipped cream and their sweet/savoury French crepes. Other specialities include creamed seafood on toast, a variety of pizzas, lamb fillet and cod dishes, to name a few. The café-restaurant sits just by the harbour on the fjord and on calm, sunny days, the view of the mountains surrounding the 15 km long fjord is spectacular.

Fáskrúðsfjörður has a rich history and is twinned with the French town of Gravelines near the Pas de Calais. Between 1800 and 1910, record numbers of French and Belgian fishermen arrived here to unload their catches, with around 5,000 men coming every year.

The town has undertaken a project to rebuild and restore a number of important historical buildings that were used by the

A popular stop for French tourists, the French Museum of Fáskrúðsfjörður is dedicated to the memory of thousands of French and Belgian sailors who played an important role in the history of the area.

**Café Sumarlína**

-EMV



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# COMFORTABLE HOTEL BLÁFELL

*Small town charm in an historical setting*

At the harbour on one of East Iceland's numerous winding fjords, lies the country Hotel Bláfell in the tiny fishing village of Breiðdalsvík, pop. 139. The family run, log cabin style hotel is imbued with the scent of fresh pine that greets you as you enter. In the lounge, guests can relax on lovely sprawling leather sofas with a nice cup of tea, or make use of the free wi-fi connection. Each of the recently renovated 30 standard, family or deluxe rooms, comes with private bath, tv and telephone.

Hotel Bláfell is known for its down-to-earth home-style cooking, offering its guests a full menu of satisfying traditional Icelandic and international favourites. Owners Friðrik Árnason and Hrafnhildur Hafsteinsdóttir and their staff are more than happy to help with suggestions of what to see and do in the area.

In the summer of 2011, Friðrik and Hrafnhildur opened the Kaupfélag Café and Tourist Information Centre, just a few metres from the hotel, where guests



can browse the well-stocked gift shop, bursting with arts and crafts made by local townspeople, including beautiful hand-knitted sweaters, paintings, decorative items and souvenirs. The café offers a selection of light meals such as sandwiches, salads, soups with fresh bread, as well as a variety of home baked cakes and pastries. Decorated with a collection of vintage memorabilia from the town's residents, Friðrik and Hildur

pay tribute to the memory of this historic building which has been a part of life in Breiðdalur since 1956.

## The unspoilt beauties of Breiðdalur

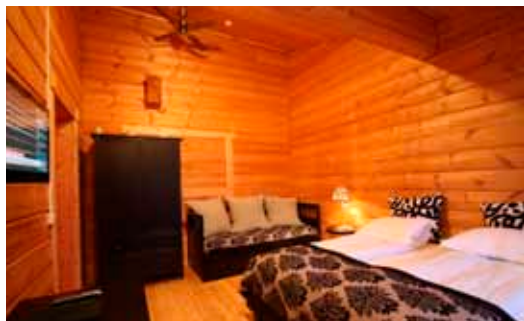
Breiðdalur Valley shares in the rich heritage of East Iceland often overlooked by mainstream tourists and, as one of Iceland's hidden treasures, the wide and verdant valley is just begging to be explored. Uncountable waterfalls descend from Breiðdalur's many peaks, and just about every farm in the valley is backed by its very own 'private' waterfall.

Picnic spots abound in the valley, as well as opportunities for horse riding and salmon fishing and you can camp just about anywhere that is not farm land.

## A most fascinating museum

The Gamla Kaupfélag is Breiðdalsvík's oldest building (1906), housing the district's Heritage and Geology Museum, where the lives and works of two of Breiðdalur's most famous scholars are showcased: Stefan Einarsson, prolific writer, linguist and grammarian and the world-renowned British volcanologist Dr. George P. Walker who spent many years doing research in and around Breiðdalur Valley. Both are recipients of the distinguished Order of the Falcon, Iceland's highest honour.

-EMV



Hótel Bláfell

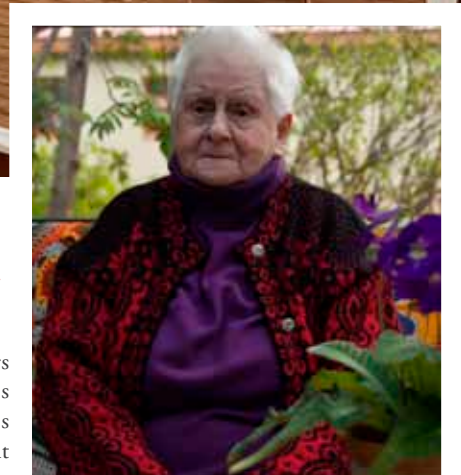


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# WHAT ONE WOMAN

*She brought the beauty of her land to the world*



## A TRIBUTE TO

## LJÓSBJÖRG PETRA MARIA SVEINSSDÓTTIR

24 December 1922 - 10 January, 2012

The grand lady of Stöðvarfjörður passed away on 10 January, 2012 at the age of 89, having lived a life devoted to a passion for collecting. Her remarkable stone collection is a testament to the vastness of the geology of East Iceland. Her remarkable life, filled with the beauty of humility and simplicity.

To describe Petra as an avid collector is an understatement and, visiting her home, you will see why. It is thought to be the largest private stone collection in the world. I asked her grandson, Ivar, if it had ever been counted "No, he says, they are quite difficult to count. Some of those more delicate have crumbled over the years, making the job of counting each and every individual stone almost impossible. We do, however, give all the stones a good clean each year in the spring

in preparation for the thousands of visitors who come every summer. The garden is cleaned of leaves and debris that collects over the winter and then each stone is put back in its rightful place - a major job that takes weeks to accomplish."

Still, just looking around we can see rocks on practically every surface of Petra's rather small house, the entirety of which is lined with shelves displaying this most amazing collection - which overflows out into her front and back gardens and around the sides, going up behind the house for about 100 metres. There could easily be 100,000 stones here. At least!

### Living up to her name

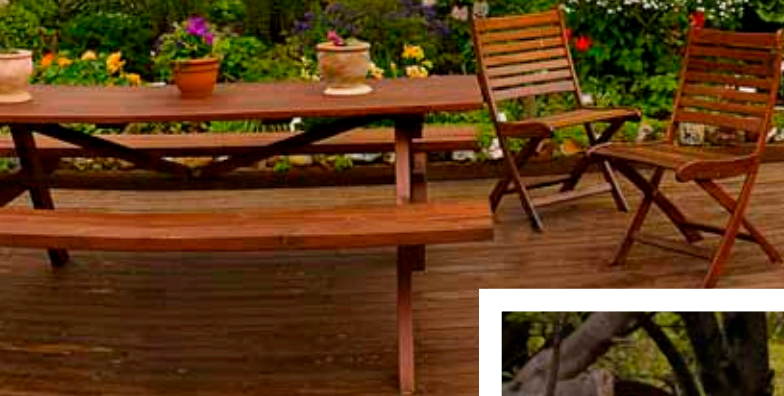
The name Petra is from the Greek word petros, meaning rock or stone. However,

this name is rarely used in Iceland and so is quite remarkable that Petra's parents chose this name for her. Even as a small child, Petra had a tremendous drive, as well as an uncanny knack for finding beautiful stones, finding her first geode at the age of 7.

For the first two decades of her collecting work, Petra was restricted to searching the north slopes of the mountains in Stöðvarfjörðar. Prior to 1962, travel in Iceland was very difficult; the roads were primitive and there was no bridge over the Stöðvará River. Nevertheless, she simply walked out her



# AN CAN DO



front door and up to the mountains above her home to conduct her searches, often with several of her children in tow.

In the past 30 years, hundreds of thousands of visitors of all nationalities have visited Petra's collection on display in her home at Sunnuhlíð in Stöðvarfjörður. Visitor numbers reached a zenith in 2003 with 20,000 people passing through the exhibition. During July and August, it is not uncommon for 200 to 300 visitors to be viewing the collection at the same time. It is the most popular tourist attraction of East Iceland.

In spite of all the interest that Petra's collections have garnered, she was not completely at ease with all the attention her life's work brought to her. In 1995, the then President of Iceland, Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, invited Petra to a special dinner at the presidential residence at Bessastaðir, where Petra was to be awarded the prestigious Order of the Falcon. Petra initially declined the invitation saying,



“This award is for the stones and not for myself and it is the stones that should be getting the award, not me!” After some persuasion from her family and friends, she finally decided to go and had a lovely time.

Petra once remarked, “I remember feeling so frustrated at not being able to write a song or a poem about all the beauty of God's creation that I have been blessed to see. There is just so, so much variety, it is truly astounding.”

If the entries in the museum's guest book are anything to go by, then it is clear that Petra has indeed succeeded

in realising her dream of being able to express her love of nature. We are indebted to Petra and now her children and grandchildren, who have opened their hearts, their lives and their home, to share one woman's passion for the beauty to be found in the geology of East Iceland.

-EMV

Petra's Stone Museum

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located at the mouth of the Fjarðurá River with views across the fjord. Recreational highlights include midnight kayaking on the fjord (in summer only), attempting the challenging 'Seven Peaks Hike', mountain biking, sea angling and bird watching at Skálanes.



**Skaftfell Cultural Centre and Bistro**  
 Overseen by the well known Indian chef, Jasmine Olsen, Skaftfell Bistro is an informal artsy kind of place that serves possibly the best pizzas in Iceland. Enjoy the thin crust langoustine pizza with a glass of red wine, or the rich Thai vegetable soup with coconut cream and a plate of fresh tapas. The bistro's interior design is inspired by the late German artist Dieter Roth and today serves as an artists' residency and cultural centre. The upstairs gallery offers exhibitions by local artists.

# TRENDY SEYÐISFJÖRÐUR

*A Delightful mix of old and new*

In recent years, the village of Seyðisfjörður at the far reaches of East Iceland, has become something of a trendy place for musicians and artists. In summer, the colourful fishing village attracts visitors from all over Iceland and abroad, who come to partake of the popular Lunga Art Festival and the flourishing cultural scene.

While the 26 km paved road from Egilsstaðir to Seyðisfjörður is steep with a number of hairpin turns, the view to the fjord is absolutely magnificent and should not be missed. Photo opportunities abound and the immensity of the panoramic proportions will present a challenge for even the best professional photographers.



## Where to stay

Hotel Aldan is a small, upscale hotel located in what used to be the bank of Seyðisfjörður for almost a century. Elegantly furnished with antiques imported from Denmark and soft furnishings from India, the bedrooms are the picture of gentle relaxation in an historical setting. Several of the rooms boast adjoining sleeping quarters in a recessed alcove, which

are sure to be a popular cosy nook for children. Immaculately clean rooms with quality linens and down duvets add a touch of luxury.

Hotel Snæfell offers an affordable hotel option in town, with a total of 9 rooms in a charming timber house from 1908. It is

Hotel Aldan's reception centre at the town's entrance also houses the high class Hotel Alden Restaurant, featuring traditional lamb and langoustine dishes as well as fresh fish from the fjord. Many dishes are seasoned with mountain herbs, hand picked from the mountains above the fjord every summer. Collected specially for the restaurant, these fragrant flowers and herbs give Hotel Aldan's signature dishes their distinctive flair. This classy restaurant is perfect for a romantic summer evening dinner in elegant surroundings on the edge of the fjord.

-EMV

**Hótel Aldan**

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## DIP INTO THE SPLENDOUR

*Mjóeyri Guest House & Travel Service*

**M**jóeyri Guest House & Travel Service is not hard to find. Just drive straight through the village of Eskifjörður and you will see the striking summer houses on a small peninsula, standing out against the jaw droppingly beautiful background of the peaceful Eskifjörður fjord.

Owners Berglind and her husband Sævar offer a variety of facilities including a guest house with 5 comfortable rooms with shared bath and sleeping bag accommodation with separate kitchen and bath. Guests are welcome to enjoy the grill on the enclosed deck, as well as the brand new hot tub and bath house. In addition, there are 5 beautiful self-contained summer cottages, each sleeping 4 to 6, made of Brazilian hardwood. Each one is two-storey and has a cosy loft for sleeping.

Imagine the view, imagine yourself relaxing in that hot tub...superb!

### Tailor-made Tours

As a travel service, Mjóeyri offers a wide variety of activities in the area, including boat rental, reindeer watching and/or hunting, nature hikes, bird watching tours—and skiing in winter. Tailor made tours according to your wishes can be arranged. Visits to Helgustaðir Cave, where Icelandic spar was mined from the 17th–20th centuries are also possible. Guidance and equipment is included.

### Randulf's Sea House

The saga of Randulf's Sea House is a most unusual and remarkable story. Built by Norwegian fisherman Peter Randulf in 1890, the building was used for landing and processing herring and providing fishermen's lodging in the upstairs quarters. After the demise of the herring era in 1930,



the sea-house sat unused and abandoned for almost 80 years. When it was finally opened in 2008, the interior was found untouched and perfectly preserved as if frozen in time. Upstairs, trousers were still hanging on hooks, several pairs of boots were left under the bunk beds and a large collection of letters to loved ones on the continent were discovered.

Mjóeyri Travel Service organises tours and events at Randulf's Sea House, now operating as a restaurant within a museum. Visitors can tour this fascinating building and afterwards enjoy a traditional meal with starters such as fermented shark, dried fish and herring on rye bread, chased by a shot of brennivín. The menu includes dishes made with ingredients from around the fjord. Try the reindeer meatballs with rice and chili sauce or the smoked and cured reindeer with salad and blueberry sauce. Traditional fish, meat soups, and roast East Iceland lamb can also be provided for group lunches or dinners with advanced booking.

-EMV



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# IN THE REALM OF VATNAJÖKULL

*The last frontier, now within reach*

The region directly beneath the Vatnajökull glacier is a 260 km long, narrow stretch of land that spans from the west of Skaftafell National Park to the town of Höfn on its eastern border. The lives of the people have been shaped and moulded according to the dictates of nature, a region which until as recently as the 1970's, was one of the most isolated in Iceland. The majority of its roughly 2,100 inhabitants live and work in Höfn, the area's largest population centre; the rest are on farms scattered throughout the district.



it. The beautiful Svartifoss waterfall, one of the main attractions within the Vatnajökull National Park, is well known for its underlying black basalt hexagonal columns.

sea level at the famous Jökulsárlón glacial lagoon—260 m at its deepest. As a national park, it's the largest in Europe.

### Points of interest

Activities in the area are numerous—take a snowmobile, jeep or hiking tour on the glacier, cruise gently around blue-tinged icebergs on a boat ride at Jökulsárlón glacial lagoon, observe puffins at Ingólfshöfði, or get a bird's eye view over the glacier on a sightseeing flight. What could be more magical than basking in the midnight sun, in the warm natural hot baths at Hoffell? These are just a few of the possibilities in the Vatnajökull Region.

### A photographer's dream

Driving through this enchanted area, the vastness of the glacier with its various outlets, makes a compelling impression on the mind. The expansive views across the black sands of Skeiðarársandur towards Skaftfelljökull glacier leaves one in awe of the glacier's sheer magnitude, relentless in its crushing effect upon the land beneath

### Some impressive numbers

Vatnajökull is larger than all the glaciers in Europe combined, (there are smaller glaciers in Norway and Russia) and the largest glacier in the world outside of the polar icecaps. It boasts the highest elevation in Iceland, Hvannadalshnúkur at 2,115 m or 6,870 feet, as well as the lowest point below

### Local Festivities

Taste some of those lovely langoustine dishes during the annual Lobster Festival in Höfn, 22-24 June, and don't forget the not-to-be-missed annual fireworks extravaganza at Jökulsárlón on 25th August.

For more in-depth information about Vatnajökull National Park, check out the visitor's centre, a major hub for hiking and mountaineering expeditions in the area, open year round.



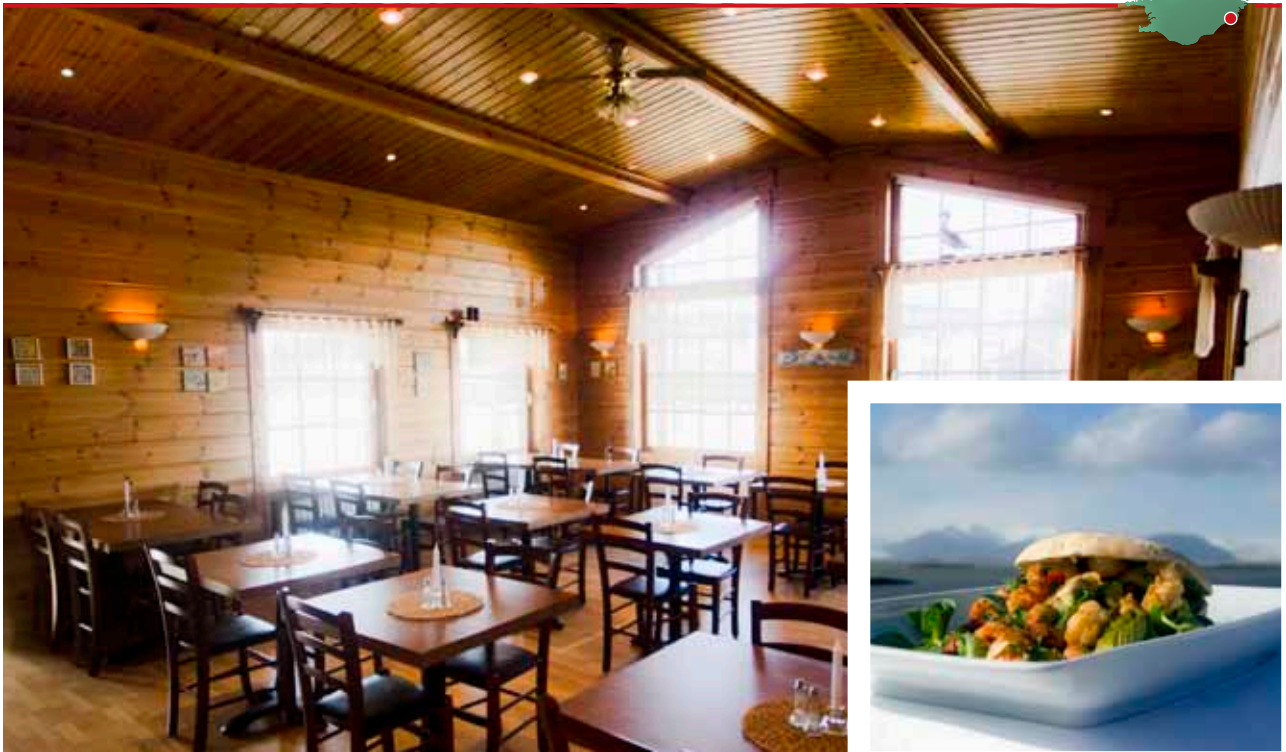
### Ríki Vatnajökuls



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# EATING WELL IN HÖFN

*Kaffi Hornið Hits the Spot*

**K**affi Hornið in Höfn í Hornafirði has a friendly, laid back atmosphere that puts you at ease the moment you walk in the door. The Finnish wooden interior and cosy tea lights flickering on each table lend a feeling of warmth to this established restaurant, which has been run by the same couple, Ingólfur Einarsson and Kristín Óladóttir since it opened 13 years ago.

Making use of the celebrated ingredients from the Vatnajökull region as much as possible, Kaffi Hornið puts emphasis on the prized langoustine for which Höfn is known. Not to be confused the North American lobster, langoustine is also called Dublin Bay prawns, Norway lobster or scampi and imparts a more delicate flavour and texture than their larger cousins.

## Specialties of the House

Chef Ingólfur offers a variety of absolutely fresh langoustine dishes including pasta with langoustine in a cognac-cream sauce, roasted langoustine with vegetables and garlic sauce, grilled langoustine with salad and even an intriguing langoustine pizza. Many of the seafood dishes come with a fabulously crunchy Swiss rösti which attests to Ingólfur's 2 years of chef training in Zermatt, Switzerland.

## A hamburger calling?

In case you are homesick for a hamburger, Kaffi Hornið's thick and juicy hamburgers will fit the bill, easily putting others to shame. Made with 120g of pure Icelandic beef from nearby farms, Kaffi Hornið's ever



popular signature hamburger is topped with mounds of melted cheese, bacon, onions and mushrooms, and comes with a generous portion of french fries. Another filling lunch option is the legendary club sandwich, which is popular among locals.

## Craving vegetables

If somewhere along your way you didn't get your daily dose of fresh vegetables, Kaffi Hornið offers a lunchtime soup with homemade bread and your choice of vegetables from the salad bar, available daily until 4 pm. Last, but not least, there is a fine selection of homemade cakes and desserts including organic ice cream from the nearby Árbær dairy farm. The addition of Icelandic liquorice to many of the more ordinary flavours like chocolate and vanilla turns this ice cream into a uniquely Icelandic dairy treat that is hard to resist.

## Not to be missed

Located right on the main road that passes through the centre of Höfn, Ingólfur and Kristín welcome you to pop in for a friendly meal whenever you are in town.

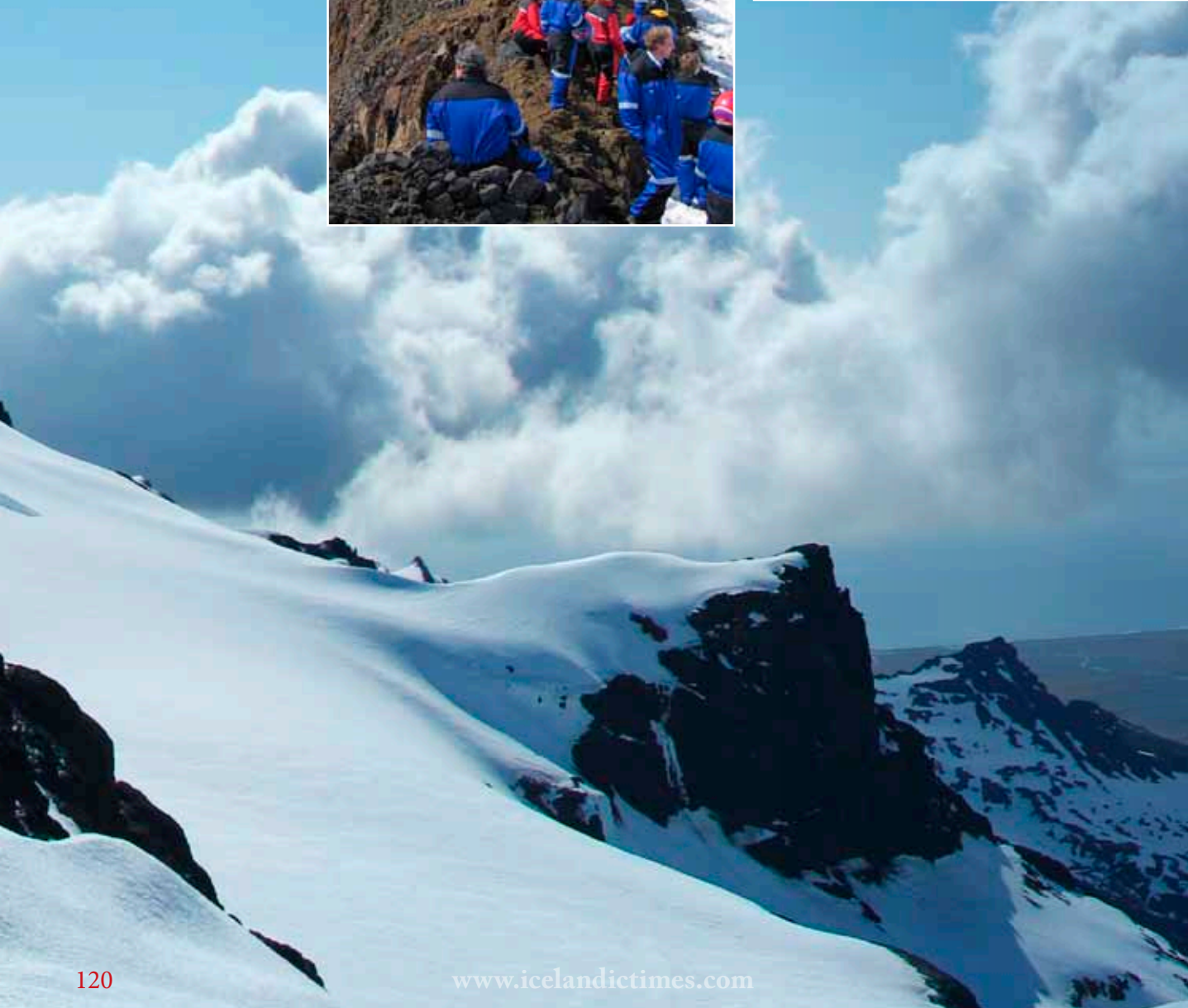


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# ON TOP OF THE WORLD

## *A timid soul's approach to the mighty Vatnajökull*



*Bed down for the night in the heart of the Vatnajökull district at Vagnsstaðir Youth Hostel, just 28 km east of the Jökulsárlón glacier lagoon. Sleeping bag accommodation, linen rental, a well equipped kitchen, dining and lounge areas, as well as 3 fully equipped cottages are offered. There is a campground with good sanitary facilities. The coast, just 1500 m from Vagnsstaðir provides numerous possibilities for scenic walks and bird watching. Maps of the area are available at the hostel.*

The weather report was looking good—a full day of sunshine ahead of me and temperatures above 10°C. I was on my way to a face to face encounter with the world's 3rd largest glacier, the mighty Vatnajökull. This trip would mark a couple of firsts for me—my first time ever to set foot on a glacier, and my first time to travel by snowmobile. Needless to say I was really excited!

I first met Kristján and Bjarney, of Glacier Jeeps, at our pre-arranged meeting place: the crossroads of Route No.1 and F985. This is the official meeting place for all Glacier Jeep summer tours. Glacier Jeeps has years of experience conducting jeep, snowmobile and hiking tours on the glacier since 1994. (Bjarney has been helping run the family business since she was 14 years old.) I parked my car and joined them in their sturdy 4WD which wound its way slowly ever upwards, following the undulating gravel road, which twisted and turned around hairpin bends, past waterfalls and deep canyons. My guides fill me in on the details of the landscape, pointing out how the glacier has crawled across the terrain, devastating everything in its path along with other interesting facts.

Thirty minutes and 830 metres above sea level later, we arrive at Jöklašel, Iceland's highest restaurant and owned by Glacier Jeeps. Jöklašel will serve as our base camp where we suit up with boots, warm overalls and helmets for the snowmobile excursion.

Now it's time to test drive the snowmobiles. I am a little hesitant at first and Kristján shows me the ropes. It looks easy enough but I decide that I prefer to let him drive over the glacier with me sitting safely behind him on this 'skidoo for two', at least until I get a better feel for it. 'Off we go over the wild white yonder, climbing high into the sun' to paraphrase an old song, with cloudless blue skies above us and the wind in our faces. Further along we

stop and dismount, to take in the magnificent panoramic views over the glacier, the Atlantic Ocean and the town of Höfn far below in the distance. I felt like I was on top of the world and it was truly a cause for celebration!

Kristján jokes that we cannot go onwards unless I drive. By now I am feeling a little more sure of myself and agree to give it a try. This time we are off to inspect a massive sheer rock face that rises straight up from the glacier at an elevation of 1200 metres. Finally, our one hour snowmobile adventure comes to an end and it is time to return to Jöklašel for a well deserved bite to eat and a hot drink. The view out the restaurant windows is as one would expect: magnificent.

Glacier Jeeps also offers a hiking tour of the glacier that comes with all the equipment such as safety helmets, climbing irons and ice axe, instruction and a guide, included in the price.

In case you just don't think a strenuous hike or a thrilling snowmobile adventure is for you, then Glacier Jeeps offers an alternative to see the glacier in a comfortable, specially equipped 4WD and is available year round, weather permitting. Each tour is only 3 to 4 hours in total, giving you plenty of time to do other things with your day, even though once you are up there you may not want to come down. Although it's best to book one day in advance, you can also just show up at the crossroads (F985) at either 9.30 am or 2.00 pm and join the tour from there.

*Vatnajökull Glacier Jeep tours: a must for your bucket list!*

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## DISCOVER AN ICE-BLUE WORLD

at Jökulsárlón Glacial Lagoon with Jökulsárlón Boat Tours

**T**here are few glacial lagoons existing in the world today and certainly none more awe-inspiring and accessible than the renowned Jökulsárlón Glacial Lagoon, situated at the head of Breiðamerkulljökull outlet glacier on the peerless Vatnajökull Glacier.

### Sail among the icebergs

Jökulsárlón ehf has been operating boat tours on the east side of the lagoon for the last 25 years. Sail among the icebergs in a 40 minute amphibious boat tour, or take an exciting 1 hour Zodiac boat tour that goes further into the lagoon, getting you as close as is safe to the icebergs and the glacier itself.

### A waffle with a view

Enjoy the spectacular view over the lagoon in the small café where traditional Icelandic waffles with rhubarb jam and whipped cream are served throughout the day, as well as homemade soup with bread, sandwiches, cakes with coffee or tea which can be either taken out on the terrace or consumed inside.

### The show of fire and ice

The magnificent annual fireworks display over the lagoon can be described without a doubt as one of the most memorable fireworks shows on earth. The event, to be held this year on 25th August, starts at 11.30 pm, with

proceeds going to Iceland's volunteer search and rescue organization, ICESAR.

Located within a few hundred metres of Route No. 1, the lagoon is actually much bigger and deeper than it appears. With an area measuring approximately 24 square km (9.2 square miles), you could easily fit the island of Heimaey (in the Westman Islands) into it with room to spare. At over 250 m (820 feet) deep, four Leaning Towers of Pisa, stacked one on top of the other, would fit inside the lagoon with room to spare.

With the ebb and flow of the tides, sea water enters into the lagoon bringing with it krill, capelin, herring and salmon. Curious seals know where the food is plentiful and can often be seen bobbing along with the currents, swimming in and out between the icebergs and appearing to enjoy the attention from onlookers on the shore.

Across the road, near the delta where fresh and salt water converge, you can walk down to the water's edge to witness the rather surreal sight of baby 'bergs' beached on the shoreline.

-EMV



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# ICEWEAR TAKES ON VÍKURPRJÓN

*Taking the knitwear industry to new levels*

Easily among the most picturesque villages in Iceland, Vík-í-Mýrdal is one of those must-see places for the tourist. With its black sand beaches, formidable landscapes, sheer-faced mountains and a church perched on a hill above the town, the postcard-like scenery is the picture of perfection. The white expanse of Mýrdalsjökull Glacier looms high above the tiny village of 291 inhabitants, one of the smallest population centres in the country.

Vík is also home to the popular woollen goods and souvenir shop, Víkurprjón, a favourite stop of independent travellers, as well as tour buses bringing visitors to the south coast. Inside you will find treasures of all sorts: lovely hand knitted items, machine-knit woollens, and a wide variety of Icelandic souvenirs to take back home with you such as mugs, magnets and t-shirts to name a few.

The Icelandic outdoor clothing company, Icewear, has recently taken over Víkurprjón, who has been a major employer in the village for many years. The move coincides with Icewear's 40<sup>th</sup> birthday and comes at a time when the company felt ready for expansion into other markets. Icewear director, Ágúst Eiríksson says that the shop in Vík will continue selling Víkurprjón products along with its own Nordic Design-Heritage Collection.

Icewear carries an extensive collection of outdoor clothing ranging from woollen sweaters, mittens, gloves and hats, to down



parkas, with an emphasis on new fabrics and trends. The company prides itself on friendly customer care and competitive pricing. Sold in shops all over Iceland, Icewear clothing is also available internationally.

-EMV



**Víkurprjón**



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## TRUE COMFORT FOOD

*Oozing history and charm at Halldór's Café and Restaurant*

**A**h Vík! That colourful little village known for its black sand beaches and offshore basalt columns that jut straight up from the sea. A place where the dazzling combination of pounding surf, majestic glaciers, and steep mountain pastures neatly come together, to form one of the most picturesque villages in Iceland.

The 700 km<sup>2</sup> Mýrdalsjökull glacial ice-cap, which towers above the town, hides the notorious Katla volcano, which last erupted in 1918. You will be happy to note that all is quiet on that particular front these days.

As if awakening from a long winter's nap, the sleepy village, (pop. 290) comes to life every spring in anticipation of the arrival of the many wide-eyed tourists who all fall in love with it each summer.

The approach to the town from the west is especially captivating; the deep blue shimmering sea comes into view as you wend your way between precipitous slopes that usher you into the village below. On a sunny summer's day when the sea is tranquil, the view is magical.

In a quiet side street, off the main highway, stands a quaint little wooden house with a rich history. Built in the Westman Islands in 1831, it was dismantled and then rebuilt in Vík in 1895. The building was used continuously as Vík's main retail shop from 1926 to 1980. It is now the home of Halldórskaffi and the Tourist Information Centre, which is open in summer from 8.00 am to 8.00 pm

Halldórskaffi, open from 11.00 am to 11.00 pm, serves simple, yet wholesome meals throughout the day. I asked owner Kolbrún which are the most popular dishes and without any hesitation, she answers with a smile, 'the arctic char and the hamburgers'. This is the kind of place that kids and teens will enjoy as well; tasty, filling, hamburgers, lamb and fish dishes, homemade pizza, soup of the day with home baked bread, and a selection of cakes are all on offer for the hungry traveller. An Icelandic beer, a glass of wine or other spirits are all options, and may be just the thing after a long day of sightseeing on Iceland's charismatic south coast.

-EMV



**Halldórskaffi**



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## IDYLIC DAYS AT ÞAKGIL

*One of Iceland's best-kept secrets*

Let me take you on a journey. But first let me say that if you are on a mad-dash, whirlwind tour of Iceland via the ring road, then this is probably not going to be your cup of tea. If however, you have the time and inclination to go on a journey of discovery to an off-the beaten-path gem of scenic beauty, then this may be just the place for you.

### **Pakgil - a hiker's paradise**

15 km off the ring road, just 5 km from Vík, lies a small enclosed canyon, sheltered on all sides by steep, moss-covered vertical mountains. The floor of the canyon is a grassy plain, about the size of an American football field, which serves as a camping site. For the less adventurous, nine recently built, snug pine huts are also available for rent. A gurgling brook passes merrily through the campground and when birds are singing nearby, you can be sure you have just discovered a little piece of heaven.

A short walk up into a nearby ravine reveals the secret of Þakgil's source of electricity—the smallest hydro-electric plant you have ever laid eyes on. The campground managers, Helga and Águst, will be happy to

give you the lowdown on its history, as well as information on several magnificent day hikes to the nearby Mýrdalsjökull Glacier. A dining hall, set in a large natural cave, comes replete with cooking grill and a fireplace for warmth on those cooler summer nights.

### **An alternative to Landmannalaugar**

Getting to Þakgil is also part of the adventure itself. You will see all manner of weird and wonderful rock formations, scenic panoramic



views that go on forever and even the remains of no less than two movie sets, Beowulf and the American TV show, 'Game of Thrones', parts of which were filmed right here. The gravel road is well maintained and your average passenger car can make it all the way to the campsite in about 30 minutes. Þakgil certainly has no trouble competing with the famous Landmannalaugar, which can get quite busy with tourists at the height of the season.

One of the best things about Þakgil is that it has only become a holiday destination rather recently. Before 2000, the majority of Icelanders had never been here, making this one of Iceland's best kept secrets.

-EMV

Tjaldstæðið Þakgili



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## SITTING PRETTY

*The Old Cowhouse Restaurant-Café-Bar*

**L**ocation wise, The Old Cowhouse Restaurant couldn't be in a more perfect position for feasting your eyes upwards to the misty, craggy, moss-covered peaks of Eyjafjallajökull. It's a welcome addition to Iceland's ever-growing list of new amenities that have been popping up all over the country. The remodelled former barn, sits right beside Route No. 1 roughly 25km from Hvolsvöllur. Its unpretentious character and sweet bovine simplicity makes this a thoroughly enjoyable place to stop for lunch or dinner while travelling the south coast.

Every weekend, The Old Cowhouse offers a reasonably priced 'tea-time' buffet,

half price for children 7–12 and free for kids under the age of 6. It features classic savoury and sweet dishes including the popular 'brauðterta', a staple found at virtually every party or special event in private homes around Iceland. If you are looking for traditional dishes, this one really does 'take the cake'. Meals can be taken outside onto the patio, with its landscaped rock and flower garden—a must when the weather is sunny and glorious.

The Old Cowhouse menu uses beef that comes straight from restaurant's own cattle herds and offers a hearty and warming meat soup called Volcano Soup, served with homebaked bread made with barley from the

nearby Thorvaldseyri Farm. On the menu, you can find two kinds of steak, 140g pure beef hamburgers served with the usual french fries, called the 'Country Burger' and the 'Farmer's Burger' with fried mushrooms and onions. Getting your daily intake of fresh vegetables is easily accomplished with salads prepared from The Old Cowhouse's own gardens or from neighbouring farms. Other possibilities include fish of the day, langoustine and for dessert, handmade ice cream from Fossís in Vík. A variety of wines and spirits are also on offer—check out the new Katla Geo Park beer!

Upcoming events include musical evenings of Icelandic folk music at various times throughout the summer, an October evening of traditional food, a November evening of game (reindeer and geese) and a December buffet of traditional Icelandic Christmas dishes.

For a nice change of pace, The Old Cowhouse is open in summer from 11–11, Monday through Friday and from 11–1 in the morning on weekends. Large and small groups are welcome.



**Gamla Fjósið**



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—EMV



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# EMBRACED BY SUMMER'S LIGHT

## Ásólfsskáli Farm Holidays

Let the magic of Iceland's midsummer night envelope you here in the foothills of the Eyjafjöll mountains on Iceland's south coast. Just minutes away from Skógar Folk Museum and the famous waterfalls of Skógarfoss to the east and Seljalandsfoss to the west, a stay at Ásólfsskáli Farm will give you a chance to renew your batteries and take advantage of the therapeutic surroundings.

### Award-winning retreat

Ásólfsskáli Farm won the 2011 award for being the best kept farm in Rangárthingeystra county and the honour is wholly fitting for this neat and tidy dairy farm that opened its doors to travellers in 1991.

The large property includes two self-contained cottages that can sleep 5-6 people

each and come complete with jacuzzi and gas barbecue on the deck, making it an ideal retreat in a perfect picture postcard setting. Visitors are welcome to watch the milking of Ásólfsskáli's 50 cows and take short hikes into the foothills along marked trails in the beautiful Holtsárgljúlfur Canyon, which is just a stone's throw from the cottages. Trout fishing, goose hunting in the autumn and horse riding in the neighbourhood are other possibilities.

### Swim on the hillside

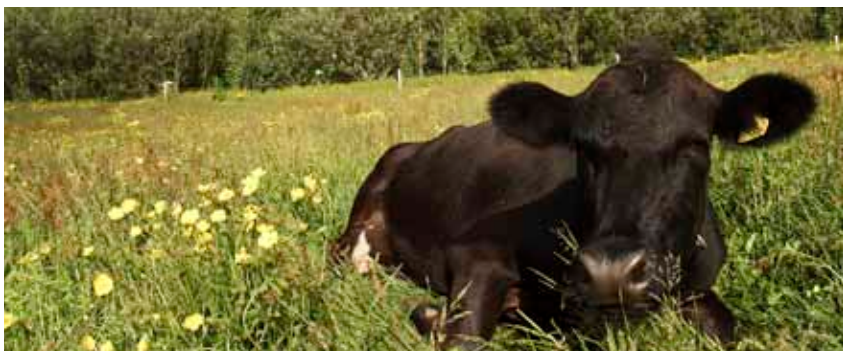
Seljavallalaug geothermal swimming pool lies 10km east of the farm, built into a hillside and into which natural hot water flows. The 9 metre-long pool, built in 1923, was a resounding success and considered to be quite an achievement in its time. There is a short

15 minute walk from the carpark to the pool and rustic changing rooms at the site. Don't forget to bring a towel! The captivating scenery surrounding the pool is serene and enchanting.

### Are you up for an adventure?

From Ásólfsskáli Farm you can book jeep tours to the famous Eyjafjallajökull glacier with South Coast Adventure as well as exciting ATV (all terrain vehicles) and snowmobile tours to the glacier with Arcanum.

Open year round, Ásólfsskáli Farm is located 2 kms from Route No. 1, via Road 246, 35 km east of the nearest town of Hvolsvöllur and 45 km from Vík.



**Ásólfsskáli** -EMV




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# SKOGAR FOLK AND TRANSPORT MUSEUM

*A showcase of Icelandic ingenuity and resourcefulness*

The Skógar Folk Museum pays tribute to Iceland's many fine craftsmen and women who each contributed in their own way to Iceland's rich cultural history.

For centuries Iceland was almost completely isolated from the rest of Europe. The wild and harsh climate made international trade, commerce and relations difficult and the heavy-handed laws imposed by the Danish and Norwegian monarchies, did not make life any easier.

As a result of the isolation and scarcity of goods, craftsmanship of all kinds blossomed and many highly skilled artisans produced a variety of useful and decorative items. Icelanders had to rely heavily on their own ingenuity and resourcefulness for obtaining many items that were taken for granted in the rest of the world.

## A Museum is Born

There are probably few natives of South Iceland more worthy of the title 'local expert' than the 90 year-old curator of Skógar Museum, Þórður Tómasson. He knows just about everything there is to know about 'the olden days' of Iceland, and with his vivid memory and keen mind, he is, for all practical purposes, a walking encyclopedia.

Þórður began his collection at the age of 14, at a time when the modern technology of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was fast replacing hundreds of years of cultural

tradition. Wander around the Open Air Museum with its historical buildings and turf houses, reconstructed piece by piece by Þórður himself. The small chapel, while new on the outside, is filled with fine church relics gathered from churches around South Iceland. There, you will often find Þórður at the harmonium, playing hymns from his youth; the music transporting visitors to another place in time.

Þórður's foresight and enthusiasm has inspired many others around Iceland to follow his example, thereby ensuring that Iceland's beautiful and unique cultural heritage is not lost forever.

-EMV



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# ÞJÓÐVELDISBÆRINN

*The Farm That Opens the Door to the Past*

**B**elow the mountain of Sámstaðamúli in Þjórsárdalur (Thjórsárdalur) in Southern Iceland lies the medieval farm, Þjóðveldisbærinn (Thjóðveldisbærinn). It is a reconstruction of the houses at the nearby 12<sup>th</sup> century farm of Stöng. The farm was constructed as a replica of Stöng farm as a part of the celebrations for

deserted is something of a mystery. The Hekla volcano violently erupted in the year 1104, spewing ash and lava and it is thought that, at this time, Þjórsárdalur, with its 20 farms was evacuated. However, some doubt has recently been cast on this chronology, with new evidence coming to light that seems to point to the Stöng farm and others continuing to be in operation after this event. Therefore it cannot be excluded that Hekla's next eruptions in 1158 or even in 1300, may have led to Þjórsárdalur being abandoned.

## Celebrating the 1100<sup>th</sup> Year Anniversary of Icelandic Settlement

During the preparations for the anniversary of 1100 years since the settlement of Iceland, well-known architect Hördur Ágústsson, the foremost expert on pre-modern housing in Iceland, was commissioned to reconstruct a full-scale replica of the Stöng farm. Ágústsson agreed and construction began during the year of celebrations, 1974 and was completed in 1977. Þjóðveldisbærinn was built to demonstrate that the medieval settlers in Iceland did not inhabit dirty hovels but lived in carefully built and stately buildings. The project was sponsored in part by the Prime Minister's office, the state power company and by the local municipality, Gnúpverjahreppur.

entrance; a sleeping and working room, called the skáli; the living room; the storage room, likely used as a pantry; a small chamber (probably sleeping room for the master and mistress of the farm) and a toilet room. Two of these rooms form the hub of activity on the farm, the skáli and the living room. Although it was also used as sleeping quarters, the skáli was important, as all manner of tasks were conducted there. The living room was also a multi-purpose space, where the women wove, cared for the children and served the meals.



the 1100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the settlement of Iceland, celebrated in 1974. Þjóðveldisbærinn is a historical venue exhibiting examples of medieval Icelandic handicrafts and technology. It is open to visitors throughout the summer from June to September.

## Rising Out of Volcanic Ash

Stöng farm was excavated in 1939 by a team of Nordic archeologists. The farm revealed much about the construction of the structures and buildings on medieval farms in Iceland. However, just when and why the farm became

## Skeljastaðir - Another Medieval Farm

Þjóðveldisbærinn is close to another long-abandoned medieval farm, Skeljastaðir (Skeljastathir). Skeljastaðir presents a classic example of medieval Icelandic architecture. The main building has six rooms: the



## The Turf Church

Visitors to Þjóðveldisbærinn can also visit the turf church, the most recently reconstructed building on the farm. It was erected to celebrate the 1,000-year anniversary of Christianity in Iceland. The design of the church was based on a church which was found during archeological research in Stöng in 1986-1998. Remains of several other medieval churches were also used to design the replica. It was ordained in the year 2000.

-AJ

### Sögualdarbærinn



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# VIKING TOURS OF THE WESTMAN ISLANDS

*Experience the Haunting Music of Bird, Man and Whale*

**M**ountainous, mysterious, and one of those places on virtually every tourist's wish list. Seen from the mainland, the jagged archipelago rises dramatically from the horizon, breaking the skyline from Iceland's south coast with a sort of 'come hither' look that you cannot evade.

The Herjólfur ferry, from its brand new port just outside of the town of Hvolsvöllur, plies the waters that separate the islands from the mainland, making the easy 25–30 minute crossing several times a day. Now you have no excuse not to see the Westman Islands!



## The Circle Tour

A fun and refreshing way to sight-see in the Westman Islands, Viking Tours' specially designed tour boat takes you around the main island of Heimaey, 2 or 3 times a day in summer.

The 90-minute tour gives you a chance to peek into caves, observe puffins and concludes with the haunting saxophone music which fills the singing cave of Klettshellur, renowned for its superb acoustics and performed beautifully by Sigurmundur Einarsson, director of Viking Tours.



## The Coach Tour

Another delightful way to explore the island is by Viking Tours' coach which departs from the main harbour every day, year round. The guided tour takes you to the still-warm Eldfell crater which erupted over the whole island in 1973, the effects of which are easily observable throughout Heimaey. You will also get a chance to observe puffins at Stórhöfði.



## 10 million puffins can't be wrong

In staggering numbers, these adorable birds flock to the archipelago year after year, the first arriving on schedule around the 12<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> of April. "The best time of day to see them is in the late afternoon and early evening when the puffin parents return to their burrows after spending the day fishing on the sea", says Sigurmundur.

## Westman Islands Whale watching

With whole families of Killer Whales and dolphins arriving in July, the Westman Islands are a great place for whale watching, boasting the largest population of these sea mammals in Iceland. Viking Tours can organise a whale watching tour for you on request.

All Viking Tours' trips begin and end at the cosy Café Kró down at the main harbour, where you can take in the 55 minute film about the 1973 eruption and learn how this singular event changed the face of the Westman Islands forever.

*See you this summer  
 in the Westman Islands!*

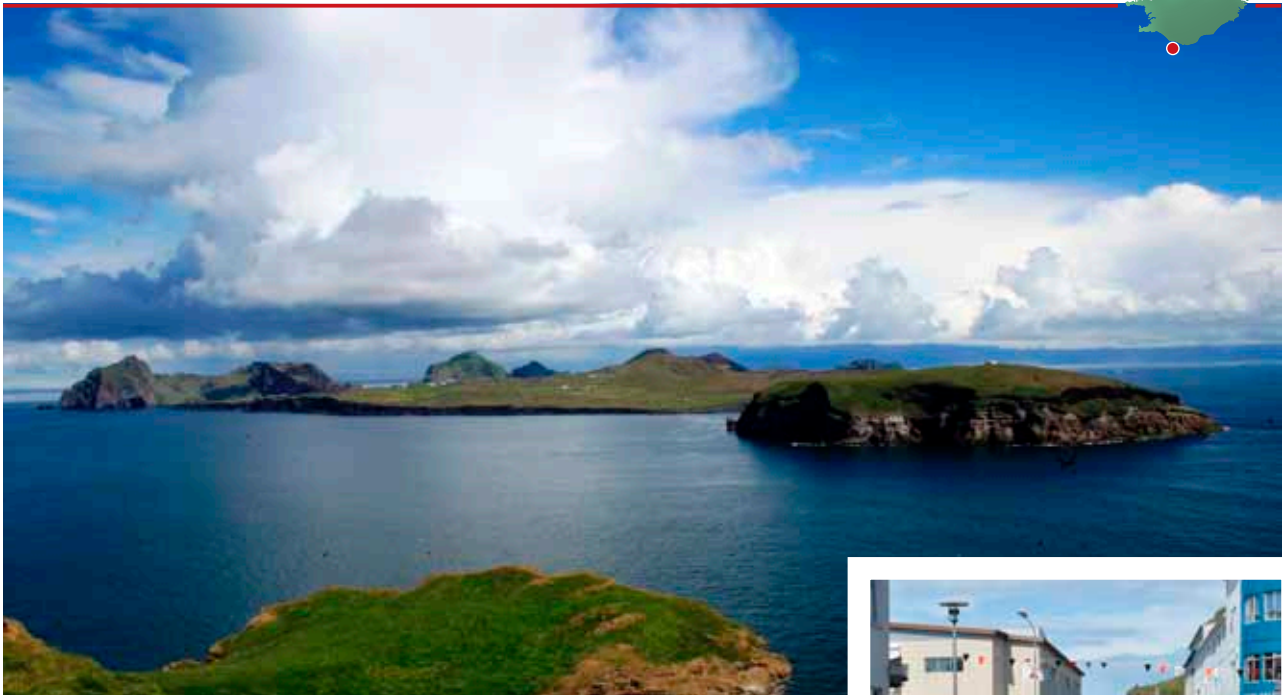
-EMV

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## GETTING THERE IS PART OF THE FUN

*A Week-end in the Westman Islands*

If the Westman Islands is not on your itinerary this summer, it really should be. The once difficult to reach archipelago is now easily accessible via the Herjólfur ferry that leaves from the port of Landeyjarhöf, near Hvolsvöllur, transporting you and your car to the island in just about 30 minutes. (weather permitting, of course) There are also direct flights from Reykjavik city airport, but taking the double decker car and passenger ferry is decidedly much more fun.

Heimaey, literally 'Home Island', is the biggest and only inhabited land in this chain of 14 volcanic islands. In spite of Heimaey's small size, there is plenty to see and do, so staying overnight in one of the island's hotels, guest houses, self-contained cottages or camp sites would be a good idea, to give you a real feel for this very special corner of Iceland.

### The Birds' High Rise

The sheer vertical walls that are characteristic of many of the islands within the archipelago are home to thousands of kittiwakes, fulmars, gannets and puffins, although the puffin population has been lower in numbers in recent years. Viking Tours offers 90-minute boat trips around the island, enabling you to sail right up close to the cliffs. From that vantage point, they resemble noisy high-rise apartment buildings with the occupants out on their balconies



having fun chatting, swooping from perch to roost and taking turns with their obligatory nest-sitting duties. The waters that surround the island are outstanding shades of a deep turquoise colour that you would never expect to find in an ocean at this latitude, giving the impression of an island dipped in crystal-turquoise ink and making for a truly memorable experience.

### A Dig with a Difference

The Pompeii of the North excavation site, is a fascinating, ongoing project to visit. It



has been digging out several homes that were buried during the volcanic eruption of 1973. The project, which began in 2005, aims to uncover a total of 7-10 houses, one of which should be entirely dug out and ready for visitors to walk through in the summer of 2013.

### Eat in a volcanic atmosphere

Tourists are encouraged to have their eyes open for some of the new restaurants that will open this summer. Hotel Vestmannaeyjar recently opened a first class restaurant specialising in local cuisine in a volcano-themed atmosphere, run by the ambitious local chef, Einar Björn Árnason. The menu will include speciality seafood dishes, as proximity to local fishing grounds provides the opportunity to obtain fresh ingredients daily.

-EMV

Vestmannaeyjabær



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## WITHIN THE GOLDEN CIRCLE

*Gallerí Guesthouse is surrounded by famous attractions*

The small but bustling town of Laugarvatn lies in the Golden Circle created by Þingvellir, Geysir, and Gulfoss and in the middle is the quaint and quiet Gallerí Bed and Breakfast.

Started by owners Þuríður and Joel after their kids had flown the nest, three extra bedrooms are now filled with tourists wanting more than the normal day trip to Iceland's most famous attractions. From an enclosed patio, two of Iceland's active

volcanoes: Eyafjallajökull and Hekla are clearly visible.

Breakfast is included in the price of the room. Gallerí's knack for handicrafts shows in light fixtures made by Þuríður and small decorations found throughout the rooms.

The Gallerí store is where Þuríður and Joel's artistry shines, allowing travellers to take home a small piece of Icelandic design.

Joel and Þuríður's hospitality extends an invitation to their guests to come along

and find out the café's secret to tasty bread, baking it in a natural hot spring close to Geysir. This bread is served along with slices of salmon each day at the Gallerí café.

-KB

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## DOWN INTO THE DEPTHS

*Caving with Laugarvatn Adventure*

The mouth of Gjábackkahellir leads down to rocky paths hollowed out by lava flows that pushed through earth, forming the cave's smooth and polished walls near Laugarvatn, the town within the Golden Circle.

The experienced guides of Laugarvatn Adventure have had over a decade of training in caving and can navigate through almost any of these caves. Tours vary in difficulty from Gjábackkahellir's relatively

gentle descent to Tintron's vertical drop accessible only by abseiling down a rope.

Laugarvatn Adventure's three cave tours let visitors safely delve into the depths with the help of guides who were educated in caving and are active members of the Icelandic Search and Rescue Team. Children over five can even go on some of the easier tours, while adults tackle the challenge of rock climbing on Þingvellir's craggy cliffs or crawling through a small hole at the opening

of Litli Björn cave. Tours are offered every day from May through August with a two person minimum necessary for departure.

-KB

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# A TASTE OF WILD AND SWEET

*Laugarvatn's Lindin Restaurant & Café Bistro*

**L**indin Restaurant & Café Bistro, located on the banks of Lake Laugarvatn, stands on a firm foundation of culinary excellence that has attracted patrons from around the world. Owner and head chef, Baldur Öxdal Halldórsson trained at the Culinary Institute of America in New York in 1986—1987, and received training as a pastry chef at the prestigious Richemont Professional School in Lucerne from 1988—1989, where he developed his interest in the art of chocolate and learnt the secrets behind a great dessert.

After his training abroad was completed, Baldur began something of a culinary revolution in Reykjavik, working at many of the top hotels and restaurants, creating spectacular and sophisticated desserts that were hitherto unknown in the capital.

## Mecca of Icelandic wild game

Baldur took over Lindin Restaurant in 2002 which is known as the ‘Mecca of Icelandic wild game’, priding itself on its year round menu

featuring only wild caught fish and seafood, game and lamb. Exotic dishes like grilled reindeer and cormorant with wild mushroom sauce and arctic char tartare with coconut sauce are featured on the menu. Always ahead of his game, you can be sure of finding new and exciting additions to his dessert menus such as his delectable chocolate mousse with raspberry sauce, with watermelon pieces and white chocolate foam and his bilberry skyr mousse with crowberries and rhubarb.

## Only the freshest

Passionate about food, Baldur insists on the absolute purity and freshness of all his ingredients—not too difficult a task when you are located in the heart of Iceland’s ‘greenhouse belt’ where he can take his pick of the choicest fruits and vegetables grown in the area year round. The restaurant even has its own small kitchen garden providing a fresh supply of rhubarb, chervil and red and blackcurrants.



## The Verdict

Taking our coffee and dessert out on the spacious terrace overlooking a lush lakeside garden, no less than 2 famous volcanoes, Hekla and Eyjafjallajökull were both visible on the eastern horizon. The setting was magical, the coffee, among the best we’ve tasted in Iceland and the chocolate mousse... was, well...simply divine.

## In the heart of the Golden Circle

Lindin is located in the village of Laugarvatn, right beside the lovely natural steam baths and pool at Fontana Spa. The 45 minute scenic drive from Reykjavik takes you through enchanting landscapes between Geysir and Gullfoss and Þingvellir, making this an excellent choice for a day trip in one of the most scenic areas of Iceland.

-EMV



### Lindin Restaurant



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# KEEP THE UNIT BEA





# KERLINGARFJÖLL TOUCHED DUTY

## *A Hiker's paradise in the interior*

Only accessible three to four months per year on Road 35, this area of the Highlands is one of the best unspoiled gems on the list of Icelandic wonderlands. Unexplored up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was believed to be the homeland of trolls and the only people that would venture here were thieves and outlaws. Today, Kerlingarfjöll is still an unbeaten track by most tourists and it should be on the checklist of all nature lovers.

### **The land of trolls**

Kerlingarfjöll means 'Old Woman's Mountain', a name inspired by ancient folk tales. It is said that an old troll lady was caught out by the sunrise and therefore turned to stone. You can still see her silhouette carved in the 25 m high tuff stone pillar at Kerlingartindur peak.

### **Raised from fire and ice**

Iceland is often called the country of fire and ice. One can truly understand this at the Kerlingarfjöll mountain range. Formed during a volcanic eruption about 10,000 years ago, this is one of the most active geothermal areas in Iceland. In the nature reserve, you can see splashing mud puddles, vents through which the earth breathes angrily and the hot spring area between the two rivers of Ásgarðsá and Kisa.

Kerlingarfjöll is situated between two glaciers, Langjökull and Hofsjökull. The microglaciers and snowdrifts found on the plateau offer unique experiences and photographic opportunities. If you get lucky, you might see small caves carved in the snow by warm streams of water.

### **Rainbow mountains**

When you drive the 80 km from Gullfoss to Kerlingarfjöll, the landscape changes

dramatically. As you approach Kerlingarfjöll, you enter a desolate, fantasy land scenery. The diverse geology of the mountains creates a spectacular flow of colours. The volcanic rhyolite stone taints the mountains red. The minerals emerging from the hot springs also colour the ground yellow, red and green.

### **Accommodation in the former skiing huts**

On the banks of Ásgarðsá river lie the former skiing huts that now provide accommodation for up to 28 people. Kerlingarfjöll used to be a popular ski resort in the summer. In the year 2000, all the ski lifts were disassembled and the resort was closed for this type of activity due to the changes in the climate and the glaciers' retreat.

### **Add Kerlingarfjöll to your Golden Circle**

Sterna, one of Iceland's leading bus companies is the only travel agency that offers day tours to Kerlingarfjöll, combined with an afternoon at the famous Golden Circle. Daily departures between 20<sup>th</sup> of June and 7<sup>th</sup> of September. The company's motto is 'Avoid the big crowds', so Sterna promises to take you to Þingvellir, Geysir and Gullfoss at a time of day when other tourist traffic is low. You can book a day trip with Sterna at any travel agency in Reykjavík. But remember: You get a 5% discount if you book online at [www.sternatravel.com](http://www.sternatravel.com). Children under 6 years can join the tour for free and they get 50% off if they are between 7 and 15 years old. Plus, you are offered a free hotel pickup in Reykjavík.

-AB



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# TAKE A BREAK AT THE WATERFALL

*Gullfoss Kaffi is the place to stop for refreshments*

Set in the midst of a farming community, the spectacular Gullfoss waterfall was enjoyed by just a few. As Iceland was discovered as a tourist location, so its wonders began to be recognised as treasures to share with the world.

Travelling to the waterfall was, nonetheless, still quite a long trip from Reykjavik and visitors longed for some refreshments, so in 1994, one of the enterprising farming families set up a tent and offered delicious, traditional Icelandic food.

Some three years later, that tent became a large summerhouse, offering more comfort and facilities until another three years later, the current centre was built, providing all the facilities travellers and sightseers alike could appreciate. In 2004, a large seating area was added.

Gullfoss kaffi gained immediate popularity and whole bus loads of visitors descended on it. With seating for 450 guests to eat in comfort, looking out to a beautiful view of the nature and such friendly, fast service, no-one was left dissatisfied.

## Feeding the hungry

There were more reasons for the kaffi's popularity than just its proximity to the best known waterfall in Iceland. They do not just serve delicious, high quality coffee in all its styles and many flavours. By the time people reached Gullfoss, they were hungry and there can be little better than a genuine Icelandic lamb soup, with its fresh ingredients garnered from the surrounding area, to satisfy the largest appetite. Whilst the soup is probably what the kaffi is best

known for, they also have a small á la carte menu for diners offering options of lamb or fresh salmon. For those who want something with their coffee, there is a range of pastries and cakes, freshly baked on the spot that are more than just tempting!

## Warm clothing and souvenirs

Gullfoss is on the main route through the highland interior that is becoming an increasingly popular way to reach the north, so it is a natural stopping point for a break. The highlands, of course, can be a lot cooler and the kaffi has a range of clothing, including handmade Icelandic wool sweaters, hats, gloves and scarves, as well as other useful clothing. This is all part of the handcrafts section of the shop where visitors can browse a wide selection of souvenirs and locally-made crafts where the skill of the Vikings once again becomes apparent in the quality of the various products.



**Gullfoss kaffi** -ASF

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# SLAKKI ZOO & PLAY CENTRE

*Where Children and Animals Get to Know One Another*

Summer is here. The newborn lambs are skipping and jumping in the fields. The flowers are blooming in all their glory and Iceland has turned green once again. The volcanic eruptions have only served to fertilise the grass and the blue skies are encouraging everyone to get out into the countryside once again.

Of course, the countryside is synonymous with animals. In Laugarás, close to Skálholt cathedral is the Slakki Zoo and Play Centre, which is one of the country's most popular animal centres. It would be a mistake to think this was just for children, however. It has activities for all the family, adults included and it makes a great day out in a place where the simple joys of life can be indulged in by everyone.

For the children to be able to experience animals close up, to be able to touch and hold many of them, is such a treat nowadays. They love the opportunity to play with

animals of all kinds and to look at the birds and fish in their own environments.

## A Safe and Fun Activity Day

There are animals of all sizes from horses to mice, pigs to ponies and everything in between. Some are inside and others can be enjoyed in the gardens. The kittens, for example, are a favourite inside their own little house, where children can hold and pet them for as long as they wish - and that can be a long time.

This is a safe environment where parents can relax, knowing their children will be enjoying themselves without harm. Families often make a day of it, as there is plenty to do. Besides the animals, there is a large aquarium and many different species of birds to enjoy. Even farmers come with their families - often wondering why their children love it so much when they have animals at home!

It's not just the animals, though. There are other games to play which unite the family in a fun entertainment such as the putting green and crazy golf.

## Relax in the Restaurant

Naturally, when you're staying all day in a centre such as Slakki, refreshments are very important and here you will find a restaurant and café filled with home-made snacks, including delicious hamburgers with salad and apple cakes with cream.

The café is in a small turf house, with plenty of



seating outside where you can enjoy the sun and the yummy, locally-made Kjörís icecream.

Stuffed animals may be fine at home, but nothing can replace the experience of holding or playing with live animals. No computer or TV can take their place, either, so it's no surprise that many families return again and again.

Slakki's indoor zoo is open every day throughout the summer months until the end of August. It is one of Iceland's

secrets that is being revealed on the Internet, with pictures and videos being posted by satisfied customers and their happy children. If you're driving the Golden Circle trip, see for yourself. It's only a few minutes off the main road to Geysir.

-ASF



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# EAT AT THE SOURCE

*Dine on Delicious Langoustines at Eyrarbakki's Rauða húsið*

A visit to Iceland is not complete without a visit to the birthplace of the Icelandic lobster industry. Here, you can indulge in a feast of the finest Icelandic seafood at the Rauða húsið (Red House) restaurant, found in the picturesque seaside village of Eyrarbakki. In this beautiful red house, a short drive from Reykjavik, langoustines are served in a charming atmosphere amidst a rich and well-preserved history.

Now a tranquil village, Eyrarbakki was once an important trading centre in Iceland. Many of its houses were built in the early 1900's and the village maintains that turn-of-the-century charm and atmosphere.

Iceland was late to discover this seafood delicacy. Lobster fishing was born off the shores of Eyrarbakki in 1954. In fact, it was not till then that the Langoustine was discovered to be not only edible, but delicious, too!

Care is taken to maintain the sense of history within the restaurant. The red house boasts beautiful original wooden floorboards dating back to 1919. If you arrive by noon, a hearty bowl of langoustine soup or a light seafood salad sets you up for the day. Choose an evening of indulgence and you can savour the Catch of the Day, consisting of three different seafood dishes. Pair a bottle of fine wine with any of the menu's offerings and cap



it off with one of the Rauða húsið's signature desserts. Serving a variety of delicious fish and meat dishes, the restaurant's cuisine is a mix of international and Icelandic foods, all featuring local ingredients.

Enjoy a walk around the village either before or after a meal at the Rauða húsið. The walk could continue along the beautiful black beaches only few minutes away from the village. A relaxing stroll by the water makes the visit complete.



**Rauða Húsið**

-ASF



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the exhibition inside is educational. From there the first Icelandic female cockswain sailed.

Nearby, sits the Icelandic Wonders Museum with the ghosts, elves and trolls that roamed the land in ancient times.

After a ghostly encounter it's time for a spot of bird watching. The country's largest river flows nearby. The vast marshlands have shrunk but are still home to thousands of birds each year. It is a very popular spot for birdwatchers who flock here.

## Culture In Eyrarbakki

Eyrarbakki has a heritage museum called, 'Húsið' - 'the House'. This beautiful old house, built as a home for a merchant in 1765 was a great centre of culture in its time.

There are many excellent restaurants and hotels in Árborg and in Selfoss two popular swimming pools. It's an excellent starting point to travel from to the many beautiful spots nearby.

## A DIVERSE COMMUNITY

*Árborg is a worth the visit*

Árborg is a community of three towns: Selfoss, Eyrarbakki and Stokkseyri on the south coast of Iceland, where lush farmlands and large lava fields intertwine to create one of the most interesting landscapes in Iceland. It is also densely populated and with people come culture, history and entertainment.



**Ráðhús Árborgar**

-SS



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### Conquering the sea

The sea is a life giver as well as a life taker. Ever since the first settlers came ashore, boats have launched from these shores and brought back the catch of fish. With no harbour along

the whole southern coastline, they went in open boats, rowing for their lives.

Puríðarbúð in Stokkseyri is an interesting example of an old Icelandic fishing station and



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# SOUTHERN FANTASY

*Reykjavik Excursions takes you to the Highlands and the Coast*

Iceland is a small country but it has been blessed with far more than its fair share of sights and wonders. The variety of different landscapes keeps visitors returning. It's not that they are just different, rather each is so unusual that it leaves visitors awed.

The tours themselves don't just drive you there and back, they make sure you get the most out of every mile, every sight along the way and hear about all the anecdotes, folk tales and history associated with them in a fun way.

Take the tour to Jökulsárlón, for example. Whilst this spectacular lagoon is the end goal, there are waterfalls, glaciers, the country's highest mountain and it's most recent volcano to see, not to mention the historical sites that abound along the way and the small villages that contribute so much to the character of the South. There is an option with this tour to take a half-hour boat trip that wends its way in a specially designed craft between the

massive blocks of ice in the awesome stillness of the lagoon in the afternoon sunlight. This is a film director's dream: an actual site that possesses a fantasy-like appearance from another world. It has actually been featured in at least a couple of major films already.

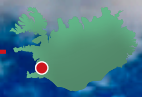
This trip has two completely different views, depending on which side you sit. On the one side are mountains, volcanos, glaciers and waterfalls, whilst on the other side are



sights like the Westman Islands, the black sand beaches and the strange rock formations stretching out into the sea at Dyrhólaey.

## **Call of the Mountains**

If you feel drawn to the mountains rather than the sea, there are several great tours that will take you to very different destinations. The Skaftafell tour takes you to a part of Europe's largest national park, Vatnajökull National Park, which is a very diverse park encompassing raging rivers, glorious glaciers, massive mountains, lovely lakes and wild wilderness areas. Skaftafell is an unusually warm spot, with a higher-than-average number of beautiful warm, sunny days. It is perhaps for this reason that flora and fauna abound along with both animal and bird life. Towering above all is Iceland's highest mountain on a vast glacier. The tour provides an option for a 2-hour walk on the glacier, where there are



# TASIES



cauldrons and crevasses. While you should bring your own warm clothing, hiking boots and rain clothing, glacier gear and safety equipment are supplied.

## Multi-coloured Mountains

Not all the mountains are covered with snow in summer or hidden under glaciers. The Landmannaugar tour takes you high into the interior to a valley between rhyolite mountains, resplendent in their many colours. You might expect it to be freezing but there is lush vegetation and the sight of people bathing in the warm springs. The Gateway to Hell, Mt. Hekla, is clearly visible from this beautiful geothermal area, just one of several volcanos in the region.

## Oasis under the Volcano

It's a few days hike from this mountain valley to Þórsmörk, lying in a sheltered valley between

glaciers and mountains. Regular cars cannot reach it. The trip there from the main road is criss-crossed with unbridged glacial rivers that can turn into raging torrents. A regular Reykjavik Excursions coach takes you to Seljalandsfoss where they have a special vehicle to safely traverse this tricky territory where cars, jeeps and even buses have been swept away. This coach has panoramic windows all round and, with its massive wheels, you sit high off the ground, so the views are superb!



Most of this land is covered in volcanic ash from a recent eruption. A former lagoon has been reduced to a mere puddle. Where's the beauty here?

The coach rounds a rough, high cliff wall and suddenly, the oasis that is Þórsmörk appears. It has its own mild micro-climate and here bushes and birch trees grow in abundance, making it popular with bird and nature lovers. It's a beautiful spot to enjoy all the different aspects of the landscape and nature alike.

Make sure to bring a good snack with you—or buy it at one of the stops. You're really out in the wilderness of the interior in Þórsmörk.

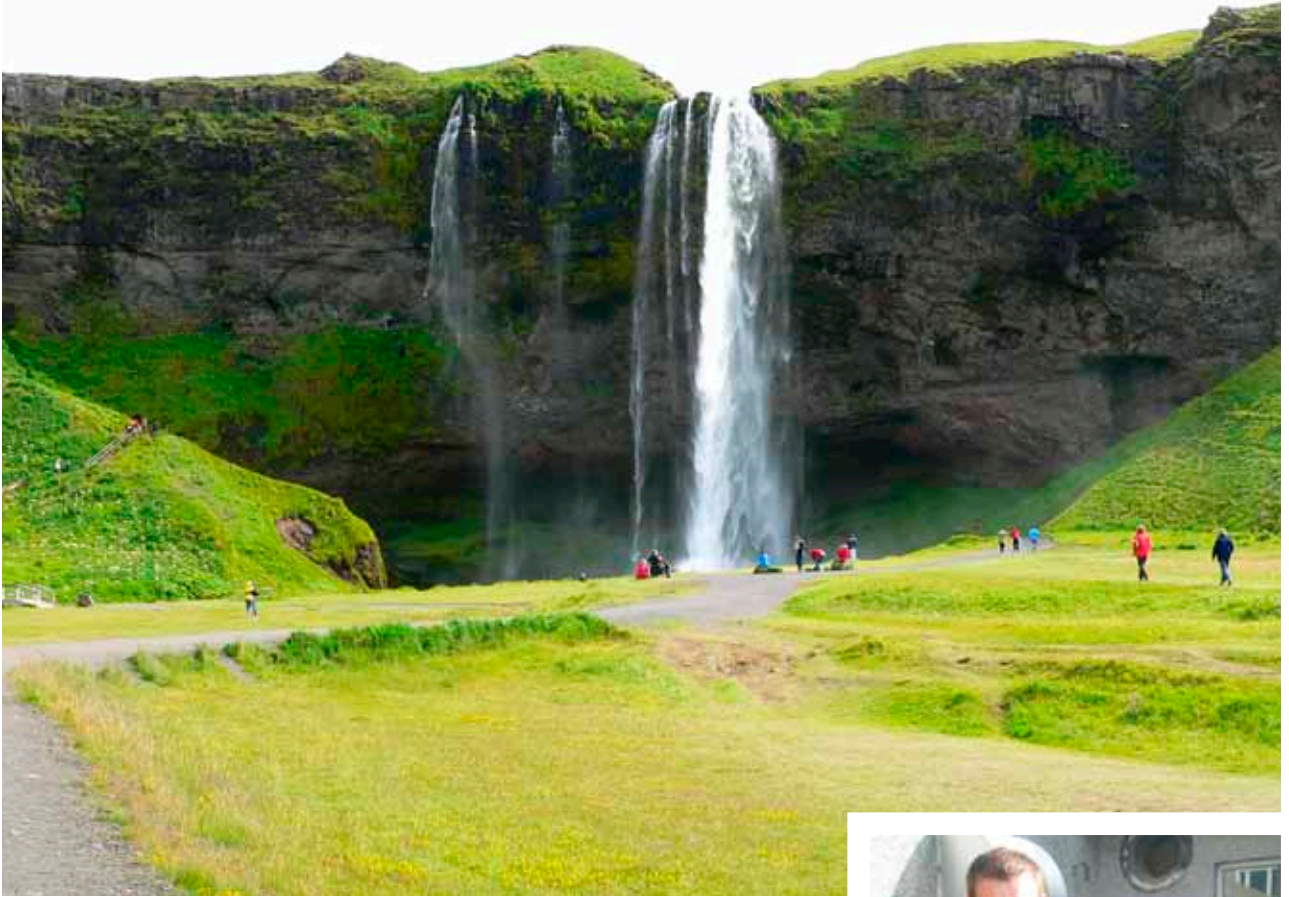
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## FORGET THE GUIDE BOOKS

*Iceland Guided Tours is for serious Icelandophiles*

When I was young, I travelled the world on a shoestring. Partly out of desire to just go where the wind took me, but mostly out of financial necessity. I read everything I could get my hands on about the country I was visiting and amassed volumes of travel books and guides. While this mode of travel is still valid, in looking back, I can't help but wonder what I may have missed.

I say this because suddenly all my cherished beliefs about independent travel came crashing down when I was invited to go on a tour to the south coast with Iceland Guided Tours.

This was my first proper tour in Iceland. I had read somewhere that seeing Iceland without a tour guide was like leaving your glasses at home—and I would have to say that I wholeheartedly agree. It was wonderful to be able to leave the driving to someone else, so I could just relax and enjoy the constantly changing weather and

landscape as it unfolded before us. Our driver/guide was bursting with interesting knowledge about the area, not only about what we were seeing, but a whole wealth of insider information that the guidebook writers know precious little about.

Iceland Guided Tours is run by a husband and wife team Óðinn and Addý, who are long time tour guides themselves. All their guides are handpicked for their thorough knowledge of the country and ability to deliver with wit and insight, in nearly flawless English.

### The little extras that make the difference

Small groups and personal service are the hallmarks of IGTours, using comfortable mini-buses that take no more than 16 passengers at a time, assuring you of a relaxing, flexible tour led by knowledgeable and friendly guides. With a passion for excellence, IGTours provide airport transfers,

cruise ship pick-ups and can organise private tours for families and individuals by super jeep, private car, or even by helicopter to any destination in Iceland of your choice.

There is only one question that remains... now that I have been with IGTours, shall I toss out the guide books?

-EMV

**Iceland Guided Tours**



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